

S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

V O L. III.

S E R M O N S



V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S

V O L . III

S E R M O N S
O N
V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S.

BY THE LATE
REV. THOMAS LELAND, D.D.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. III.

D U B L I N :

PRINTED BY GEORGE BONHAM,
FOR WILLIAM M'KENZIE, BOOKSELLER, IN
DANE STREET; AND FOR THOMAS LONGMAN,
BOOKSELLER, PATER NOSTER ROW, LONDON.

M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

S E R M O N S

O N

V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S

BY THE LATE

REV. THOMAS KELAND, D.D.



I N T H R E E V O L U M E S

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—ADCCXXXVIII—

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S E R M O N XXVIII.

On the Anniversary of the Irish Rebellion.

Preached in CHRIST'S CHURCH, DUBLIN,

October 23, 1771.

ISAIAH, xiv. 29.

*Rejoice not thou—because the rod of him that
smote thee is broken: for out of the ser-
pent root shall come forth a cockatrice:
and his fruit shall be a fiery burning
serpent.*

IN applying the denunciation of the
prophet to the occasion of our present
solemnity, it is not my purpose to in-
sinuate that there are any moral rea-
sons to apprehend a revival of those
Vol. III. B calamities

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calamities experienced from any ‘*workers of iniquity,*’ who ‘*pretended religion and practised rebellion.*’ I mean but to deduce a plain and obvious doctrine from these figurative expressions, which at all times, and especially when we commemorate a national deliverance, may deserve our serious attention. And the doctrine is this:

‘*God, in the gracious ways of his providence, may be sometimes pleased to relieve his creatures from those afflictions, with which he has visited their iniquities. The “remainder of wrath,” he may “restrain.” But let not man exult in such deliverance as wrought for his sake. Let those who have bowed under the weight of affliction seriously lay to heart those offences which have involved them in “lamentation and woe.” If those be not forsaken, the “arm” of the*

‘*the*

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the almighty "*is not shortened*;" the flame of his wrath may be rekindled with double fury: and he, who is of "*purser eyes than to behold iniquity*" hath yet a fore chastisement, a fiery and a burning plague, for the obstinately careless and impenitent.

SUCH are the warnings of the spirit, not to individuals only, but to whole nations; and ingenious men sometimes contend, that, to nations, God's justice *must* be manifested in this life, the only period of their collective existence. But although we may not peremptorily pronounce on the ways of his adorable providence; yet we know that he is "*the most high that ruleth in the kingdom of men*;" and if there be, now, no occasion to use "*this proverb in Israel*," the "*fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge*;" yet God's dealings with

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our forefathers may be at least considered as our examples; and profitably revolved for our instruction and correction.

THESE are doctrines we have, this day, solemnly professed, and applied to the occasion of our present assembling before God. In our devotions we have acknowledged that, as a nation, 'our sins had most justly provoked him to wrath, when he did suffer the men of blood to make their swords fat with the slaughter of innocents; and that we may as justly fear, that by our not being made better by his former judgments, he may make his sword sharper, because our sins are greater, more bold, and more provoking.'—And if this hath not been a mere lip-service, an hypocritical or careless mockery, surely we must reflect on those sins we have so solemnly

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lemnly acknowledged; we must review our own conduct; we must enquire, in sincerity and singleness of heart, what may be found in present times which demands correction; we must resolve to “*put away the evil from the midst*” of us; that the return of God’s judgments may be averted: and to such reflections I would now lead you.

THE avowed intention of that dreadful conspiracy discovered, as on this day, but, unhappily for this kingdom, not immediately defeated, was to exterminate the English power, and to restore the popish superstition in its full splendour and authority. They who deny that national resentment had any share in forming it, seem not to have considered the situation, temper, prepossessions, and provocations of the great actors in this bloody tragedy. They
who

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who contend that it was influenced entirely by this motive, affect to forget that it was not formed, or at least not conducted, by agents of one race only; and that the cruelty of their wrath was not confined to the English inhabitants of this land; but fell equally upon the Scottish settlers, whose antient affinity with the original natives could not redeem the crime of their religion.

As to the rancour of national resentment, let truth itself bear witness, and candour confess, how far the iniquities of our forefathers contributed to exasperate, to confirm, and to perpetuate this rancour. When the gradual progress of their arms had extended their power and possessions, were the old natives, a spirited and haughty race, conciliated by kindness, by equity, or by justice? or were they
treated,

treated, where they could be so treated, like beings of an inferior order? [In discourses like the present we are necessarily confined to a few obvious and indisputable facts.]—When melancholy experience had taught the natives of Irish race the folly and the danger of their antient institutions, and the superior advantages of English polity; when their properties were indefensible, and their lives rated at an insignificant price; when they repeatedly petitioned to be redeemed from a state of vassalage, to be received and sheltered within the pale of English law; a petition, wrung from the painful feelings of oppression, so reasonable in itself, and so likely to be attended with the most beneficial and happiest effects; which would at once have abolished all odious and unjust distinctions, and united the inhabitants of this island, as fellow christians and fellow subjects, in peace, order and civility, was repeatedly

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peatedly rejected: not from any want of equity in the crown; there the application was received with favour and attention; but by contrivance of the great English inhabitants of this kingdom, who interposed, like a malignant cloud, to intercept the Royal favour, and to prevent those from being received as subjects, whom they oppressed securely in a state of abject vassalage. They turned "*aside the needy from judgment;*" they took "*away the right from the poor;*" and "*in their skirts was found the blood of*" many "*souls.*"

AND mark the fruit which sprung from this bitter root of injustice and oppression. A long and gloomy period of wars and commotions; hereditary hatred, and the deadly feuds of various generations: barbarism and anarchy, violence and revenge. Nor did they who had refused to prevent
such

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such disorders, unite in suppressing them. In the lust of power and possessions, they were become the bitterest and most implacable enemies to each other. That salutary civil constitution which they had sworn to maintain was become hateful, and intolerable to their pride and avarice. They either openly renounced its laws for the rude manners and barbarous institutions of their neighbours, as these were more indulgent to violence and rapine, and petty tyranny; or they controuled and oppressed the execution of them, and laboured to enfeeble those hands by which they were administered. The governour chosen from their own body was envied, and opposed, perhaps by violence: Those sent from another kingdom were embarrassed and maligned. One came, and quickly found it too difficult to stem the course of faction; another and another quickly succeeded,

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succeeded, departed, and left their successors to make a short experiment, and relinquish the hopeless charge. Their efforts to suppress the public disorders were ineffectual; their devices for the public reformation were defeated: for some great family was not indulged with power; or the soul of some rapacious Lord was not satisfied with riches. A people, who could have found their happiness only in a rational and equitable union, were thus divided and armed against each other; and a land which God had blessed with many gifts experienced ages of desolation: for the vices of those who should have run foremost in the glorious work of reformation induced the miseries of a feeble government, an imperious nobility, laws suspended and controuled, factions engendered by pride and oppression, the turbulence of the old natives, the injustice of the new settlers,

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settlers, local wars, and barbarous massacres.

AND now, as to the blindness and malignity of papal superstition, the great and leading cause of this day's calamity, let us consider whether the same iniquities did not contribute to support and strengthen this dreadful enemy of our peace.

THE beginnings of the reformation found this country in circumstances totally different from those of other European states. Want of equal laws had here perpetuated odious distinctions, partiality, injustice, feuds, bloodshed, devastation, savageness; and had banished that peace and security which are necessary to improvement, learning or discipline. Where law and justice had not pervaded, regularity, even in ecclesiastical procedures or promotions, could not take place: and the clergy, particularly

particularly without the English pale, had deeply shared in the darkness and barbarism of their country. Even after learning had revived in the neighbouring nations, and when religious enquiry had roused and was occupying all the rest of the christian world; even then, deplorable are the instances we meet with, in the most eminent among the Prelates of this unhappy country, of monkish ignorance, and of gross and childish superstitions, even when Rome itself had owned the necessity of a reform.

SUCH a clergy, and a laity, of course, uninstructed, were, in proportion to their ignorance, abjectly attached to the papal authority, the only authority in religion which they had been accustomed to reverence. The peaceable, who had never examined the great points in controversy, rested indolently upon the antiquity (as it was called)

of

of former establishments; and in this relaxed state of mind were stricken with greater terrour at the denunciations of divine vengeance launched against innovation and heresy. The factious affected to regard every new regulation in the affairs of religion as arbitrary and profane; and seized the occasion of inveighing against such offensive exertions of authority. The busy agents of popery, who nestled in every quarter, were received and heard by such a people with favour and attention. They spake to their countrymen and kinsmen in their own language, and flattered their prejudices. An opposition to that government which they had sworn to obey, they called the glorious assertion of their native liberty; and an obstinate adherence to the article which composed the whole of their religion, an implicit attachment to the Romish communion,

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munion, they dignified with the name of pious zeal and steadfastness in the cause of truth. While one built up the wall of separation and national distinction, another daubed it with the untempered mortar of superstition: and thus when once the means of uniting and civilizing the whole body of the people had been shamefully rejected, the curse of ignorance and bigotry was of consequence entailed upon them. Laws were indeed made for the establishment of the reformed faith and worship. But these laws were received with reluctance. They who should have enforced them were secret enemies to their authority. Popish teachers might be indeed driven from their flocks; but others were not found to supply their places; and, alas! were not always sought for: For amidst the errors and iniquities of this generation, we must reckon a shameless prostitution of holy things.

It

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It is not surprizing that a popish party in the legislature should labour to defeat every measure for the edification and instruction of the people. It would scarcely be surprizing should we find some factious leaders then bartering their services in support of government for the spiritual preferment of their kinsfolk and dependents: but, at a period when nothing less than the united labours of an able and indefatigable mission could have sown the good seed in this kingdom, how shameful is it to find that it was necessary by a law to check the sacrilegious practice of conferring benefices on children?

HERE we are tempted to exclaim with the prophet, "*shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord?*" and at an unexpected time were we visited. When public disorders had been apparently quieted, and the errours of past days corrected;

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corrected; when an equitable attention to their temporal interests, and a charitable indulgence to their religious prejudices, promised to reconcile those who had been too long estranged from us; when we said in our hearts, "*Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim:*" then did the flame of antient animosity burst forth with a devouring fury. "*We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health; and behold trouble!*" "*Death*" was "*come up into our windows,*" "*and entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.*" "*The carcases of men*" fell "*as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvest man.*" "*A voice of wailing*" was "*heard:*" "*How are we spoiled! We are greatly confounded.*"

But

S E R M O N XXVIII. 17

BUT it is not my purpose to dwell upon the calamities of this period. And I trust it is here unnecessary to expatiate on the dangerous and unchristian spirit, which would establish the peaceful kingdom of Christ Jesus, by the most tremendous excesses of that "*wrath of man,*" which, we are assured, "*worketh not the righteousness of God.*" Let us confess that those of the Romish communion, even at the time of the horrid transactions we now commemorate, were not uniformly actuated by the full malignity of this spirit. Let us charitably hope that Popery, at this day, hath been softened by a kind of tacit reformation. While we cautiously guard against all possibility of danger, we may the less scruple to indulge such sentiments. At least I have consulted your edification, by leading you on this occasion into a new train of reflection: by tracing

the calamities which this land experienced for ages, and which the confederacy of this day filled up, to the errors and iniquities of our forefathers; that, taught by their example, we may reform our own conduct, and avert the return of God's judgments. More than a full century hath elapsed since that deliverance was wrought for which we now return thanks. And yet let it not be thought extravagant to assert, that at this day the nation hath not recovered from the miserable consequences of that dreadful period. It has cast us behind all civilized nations, and retarded our progress to maturity. And God grant, that, like some unhappy individuals in their state of youthful imbecility, we may not have already learned that petulance and vice, the too sure and dismal consequences of which are a distempered frame and speedy dissolution.

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THE vices which have been mentioned as the sources of our national calamity were oppression, avarice and cruelty; factious discontent and clamour; and indifference and disregard to religion; heinous and crying offences, and such as are the declared objects of God's severest vengeance. If we should consider the condition of our poor, or the conduct of their superiours, the manners of common life, or the characters and pursuits of those more exalted, we might possibly find abundant matter for an odious parallel. But the remainder of this discourse may be more usefully employed in serious and affectionate exhortation.

If we would indeed bring down a blessing upon our nation, let us, in the first place, labour to unite together in the bands of love and affection, as fellow-christians and fellow-citizens; with

an equitable attention to the rights, interests and welfare of all orders and conditions. And, above all things, let our charity be displayed in the zealous prosecution of that truly Christian work of enlightening the ignorant. One public Protestant institution, conceived in the true spirit of our holy religion, for sowing the good seed in youthful minds, I trust God hath blessed and will bless with a gradual encrease. And would to God that methods were devised to extend the benefit! that the poor of all denominations, in every quarter and every district of the kingdom, were provided with the means even of common instruction, and encouraged to pursue them! that by civilizing, I had almost said by humanizing, the lowest orders of our people, the avenues to religious knowledge might be rendered less inaccessible to those who now perish for lack of that saving knowledge.

AND

AND if we would be "*as a city at unity within itself,*" let us, in the next place, be strictly guarded against the influence of faction, or what is called political party. In a country where public affairs are at all the object of public discussion, it must needs be that such offences will come. Whether they arise from the opposite opinions or clashing interests of our superiours, we judge them not. Our part is only to consider what our own conduct is, or ought to be. That warmth and alacrity with which we have at some times converted the discontents of a few into the madness of the many, have afforded the adversaries of our religion (for in no other respect do I call them adversaries) a pretence to malign us; and they have seized it. They have represented us as actuated by a spirit of turbulence and sedition; they have urged it as a necessary point of policy, to

to protect, cherish, and encourage *them*, in order to form a balance in this country against *our* restlessness and discontent. Instead of deriding their insinuations, let us condescend to learn instruction from them. They have at length been taught to affect an ardent zeal for English government, and an abhorrence of every attempt to embarrass or distress its administration in this country. They have watched the times when we seemed in danger of being seduced from our proper post, and lay ready to seize it. Let this convince us that it is the post of greatest honour and security. While we support and reverence the royal authority, and labour to strengthen the hands to whom it is here delegated, we cleave to our stay and our staff; we stand securely upon our natural basis: from which nothing but the most violent national convulsions should
be

S E R M O N XXVIII. 23

be able to remove us. To be tossed about by every wind of clamour or discontent would be ridiculous as well as dangerous. It would reduce us to the condition of him whom the wise man describes sporting with firebrands and arrows.

BUT I hasten to the point of greatest consequence. For our brethren and companions' sake, for the sake of our immortal souls, let us labour for the revival of the true vital spirit of religion. This is that pearl of great price which not only far outweighs, but comprehends in it all that is great valuable and praise worthy in the conduct of a man or of a citizen. Let it once take possession of our hearts, and become the reigning principle of our conduct, and we shall need no exhortations to justice, equity and peace. It will be our sure guide and direction :

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tion: our comfort and support. It will compose and harmonize all our secret disorders, and render every action of our lives useful and honourable in the sight of all men. He who, without this blessed principle, affects the name of Patriot, at once betrays his clandestine purposes: and he who boasts the title of Protestant, degrades this honourable name into the mean signature of a faction. If we be indeed sensible of the inestimable goodness of God in bringing us to the light of true religion, let us walk as children of light. This is the only true and unfeigned expression of thanksgiving to the father of mercies, for rescuing our church and realm from the tribulation of former days: this is the only means of securing and perpetuating his blessing to us and to our country.

Now

S E R M O N XXVIII. 25

*" Now unto him that is able to keep
" you from falling, and to preserve you
" faultless before the presence of his glory
" with exceeding joy, To the only wise God
" our Saviour, be glory and majesty, do-
" minion and power, both now and ever.
" Amen!" Jude, 24, 25.*

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*Preached at the Visitation of the Diocese
of DUBLIN, 1769.*

I ST. PETER, v. part of verse 2.

——— *Not by constraint ; but willingly :
not for filthy lucre ; but of a ready
mind,*

WE need not be informed that the work to be undertaken with these dispositions, is the nurture of God's flock, the inspection of that family for which our Lord was contented to be betrayed, and the guardianship of those souls which were redeemed by the blood

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blood of the Holy One. This it is, which the Apostle exhorts those immediately entrusted with the important charge, to pursue with alacrity, with sincerity and zeal : “ *Not by constraint;*” not as supporting an official burden rashly or reluctantly undertaken, with indifference or distaste; “ *but willingly;*” with an affectionate and lively disposition of the heart: “ *Not for filthy* “ *lucre,*” not from motives of any worldly advantage; not calculating and proportioning the labour to the attainment of any such unworthy objects, “ *but of a ready mind:*” a mind deeply possessed with the excellence and importance of the office, and anxious for its success.

THEY who hear me know, that I do not give more weight to the original expressions of the text, than they fairly bear.—And if there be any instruction

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struction in the word of God, to the ministers of his word; any solemn and affecting exhortation; if as ambassadors of Christ, they are warned to persuade and to beseech, as shepherds, to lead the flock into wholesome pasture; as stewards, to make the due and seasonable distributions to their fellow servants;—every precept and every admonition is directed to this one end, and all included in this one thing, a lively, sincere, zealous and affectionate disposition to the work of the ministry. This is that “*gift*,” which it highly concerns us all to “*stir up*” within us; the hearer and the speaker, the inferiour and the governour alike, him that “*planteth*” and him that “*watereth*,” that God, who alone “*giveth the increase*,” may pronounce a blessing both on the labourer and his harvest.

AND

AND now, with respect to this lively zeal, and sincere solicitude for the salvation of souls; there are two points obvious to be considered: (and the occasion of our present assembling calls on us in an especial manner to weigh them carefully) First, the necessity of such a disposition, as the ruling principle of every one among us: And, secondly, the influence of such a principle upon our vocation and ministry.

I. As to the first of these, I trust we need not that any should illustrate or enforce it. We know that we have engaged in an employment of the greatest dignity and the greatest moment; that can be assigned to man: that we are fellow workers with God, for the salvation of our brethren: his chosen instruments in the great and stupendous dispensation of mercy and loving-kindness; for which the High
and

and Holy One humbled himself to behold the things that are on earth; for which his power was revealed, and his arm extended over the nations: the minds of his chosen illuminated, and their mouths taught to utter his salvation; the course of nature suspended and controuled; and all the works of God made to bear witness of his mercies: for which the Son of God assumed *"the form of a servant;"* and *"became obedient,"* even to the *"death of the cross:"*—that we are his immediate followers, who was for a *"covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;"* *"to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison; and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house:"* the messengers of that salvation which is *"for ever,"* of that *"righteousness"* which shall not *"be abolished,"* though the *"heavens shall vanish away like smoke; and the earth shall*

"shall wax old like a garment:" that the service to which we are called, and to which we have bound ourselves and all our faculties, by the most solemn vow, is in itself so interesting and so exalted, that worldly cares and concerns, however dignified and ennobled in the eyes of man, are altogether lighter than vanity itself, compared with the office of dispensing the riches of God's mercy, of directing and conducting men to that eternal kingdom, where all that is accounted great, noble, important, or exalted, among the children of this generation, shall be utterly forgotten, vanishing at once before the brightness of that *"glory which shall be revealed."*—All this, I say, is too evident to be illustrated, and too weighty to be enforced.

—God knows! when we seriously consider the momentous charge entrusted to

us ;

us; and then turn our thoughts inward, and reflect on our own weakness and unworthiness, the best and purest among us must shudder; the ablest of God's instruments must ask, with profound abasement, "*Who is sufficient for these things?*" The slight and transient attention to our duty; the formal, or what is sometimes called, the decent discharge of it, falls so shamefully short of "*the work of an evangelist,*" that we should blush at the indulgence it sometimes meets from men. Not to feel the liveliest zeal and ardour for this work, the utmost anxiety for its success, argues a despicable, an odious, and a horrid insensibility. Shame and confusion attend the uttering this plain truth; but the least reflection must extort it.

YET to little purpose is the understanding impressed with it, unless it descend yet deeper, and possess the heart.

heart. It should therefore be frequently recalled, presented to the mind in every view, and seriously and attentively revolved; that we may invite that spirit to dwell within us, by whom alone our affections are enlivened. And for this reason, suffer me to engage your attention more particularly to the second point proposed, the influence of a sincere and lively zeal upon our vocation and ministry. Thus shall the excellence of this principle be displayed in the fruits which it produces; and thus shall we perceive the real distinction between the true shepherd and the hireling; so as to *"prove our own selves"* in those particulars of which we are to render so awful an account, in the great day of the Lord.

II. And here it seems scarcely necessary to premise, that a lively zeal and affection for the Gospel-ministry, supposes

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poses such a previous conviction upon the teacher himself, as operates effectually in forming his life and conversation. To teach what he himself doth not believe, or (what is precisely the same as to its practical effect) what he doth not regard, is such a strain of horrid hypocrisy, as, we must hope, is rarely found. But, far from being freed by our destination from the perversions and corruptions of humanity, we have melancholy conviction that it is our part, equally with our brethren, to be guarded against the adversary. And the minister, sincerely solicitous for the success of his labours, possesses the most urgent motive to a vigilant and cautious attention to his own life. 'I know,' saith he, 'that while I preach to others, I am myself in danger of being "a cast away:" But I, of all men, must take heed to my ways:' "For what fellowship hath righteousness

"with unrighteousness; and what com-
 munion hath light with darkness? And
 what concord hath Christ with Belial?"
 I have to account for the souls of
 many others, as well as my own: and
 woe to that wretched soul of mine,
 should I prove an offence and stum-
 bling-block! I must engage the fa-
 vourable attention of men: I must
 conciliate their affections: I must la-
 bour for their reverence. Every ac-
 tion of my life must be duly weighed,
 and every incident deliberately consi-
 dered. What may be lawful to many
 is to me totally inexpedient; for I am
 to defer to the opinions, the pre-
 judices, and even the innocent errors
 of those around me.—Thus, a just
 and sincere concern for the work in
 which we are engaged, will prove at
 once our powerful incitement and sure
 direction.—How will this action affect
 the flock? What shall be its influence
 upon

upon our doctrine? What reception shall it procure the teacher? What deference to his instruction? What weight shall it give to his exhortation? What force to his reproof? Such is the self-examination which becomes the minister of the Gospel. I dwell upon the important object, for I feel the melancholy necessity of impressing it upon my own mind.

Let us now consider how the same principle will operate on the discharge of our ministerial office. Of this, the most generally observable parts are, offering up the prayers of the congregation; and the public handling of the word by instruction and exhortation.

We know that there is not a more affecting object upon earth, than an assembly of the faithful, pouring forth, before the throne of grace, their joint
sup-

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supplications and praises, with humility
 and fervent piety. But we know our
 weakness and wanderings; how sin and
 vanity steal upon our thoughts; how
 wild suggestions and fantastical conceits
 force their way upon our most solemn
 engagements. Our religious establish-
 ment, we know, boasts a liturgy the
 most edifying and affecting, both in or-
 der and composition. But we also
 know, that amidst the manifold advan-
 tages of an established form, over the
 best and most intelligent of extemporary
 devotions, established forms are yet al-
 most necessarily subject to one inconve-
 nience, that of degenerating, by daily
 repetition, into a lip-service. And there-
 fore the man zealously affected to his
 ministry will enter upon this part of it
 with attention and solicitude, to keep
 his own mind fixed and collected, to
 awaken the indifferent, to animate the
 languid, and to confirm and assist the
 serious

serious and devout. From him, we never hear the most solemn devotions giddily and carelessly delivered; the most affecting expressions of contrition and abasement uttered with a flippant and self-sufficient ease; the most exalted strains of rapture and adoration debased by a coldness and insensibility of utterance. He engages the attention, not by any affected refinement, but by that seriousness and devout solemnity which express a due sense of the office he is discharging: he engages the affections, not by any unnatural and extravagant emotion, but by discovering a mind awfully and devoutly affected; he feels, and therefore he makes others feel, the impression of that stupendous Majesty to whom he bows the knee.—But above all things, he never entertains a thought so frivolous, as that this part of the ministerial office is not suited to some nominal superiority which he may

may possess: or that the noblest employment of a Gospel-minister is to be confined to those, presumptuously called, the inferiours of his order.

IN his public instruction the same zealous concern for the salvation of souls is equally distinguishable, and equally productive of the happiest effects.

CONSTANT preaching, and this by every person engaged in the ministry, was not indeed in the intention of those who first modelled our reformed Church. It is needless to mention by what means the practice was established: nor is it our part to determine whether another mode of instruction might sometimes be usefully and prudently substituted in its place. We are bound to give it all the advantage in our power: and the practice is attended with this good effect
on

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on us, that it obliges us, even from our first admission to the ministry, to study our religion with the greater diligence. Hence, the discourses of our divines which have been given to the public, contain such a treasure of Christian knowledge; instruction so clear, conviction so powerful, exhortation so spirited, and yet so temperate; in a word, a system of belief and practice so rational, solid and edifying, as no other church, as yet, could ever boast. In these great master-builders we see the influence of an enlightened and well-directed zeal for the edification of God's people; and he who is actuated by the same principle, will follow their steps, draw from the same source, and apply to the same purpose. He will not drag on the heavy interval allotted to his teaching, in a cold and lifeless, faint and languid exposition of unaffecting matter, delivered with an unaffecting indifference; deluding

deluding the expectations of his flock, by the shadow of instruction. He knows not the contemptible affectation of recommending himself, instead of the Gospel he is to preach. He doth not convert the two-edged sword of the word into a weapon of parade and ineffectual glitter: disgracing what is greatest and loveliest by the frippery of false learning; and prattling what is awful and affecting in the quaint phrases of the world; as if the scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, should only be solicitous to display his breeding, his refinement, or his liberal intercourse. Nor doth he contaminate the word of truth by an absurd mixture of what is foolishly called ornament, to play round the imaginations of the ignorant; while the judicious are disgusted, and the pious mourn.

THEY whom God hath blessed with talents for this ministry, have
only

only one way of rendering them ineffectual; by suffering their minds to be possessed by the miserable ambition of displaying them, instead of a noble solicitude for the welfare of the flock. And for the comfort and encouragement of those who are conscious of weakness and imperfection, let it be considered, that unequal to this part of our office as we may be, yet, with hearts warmed with a desire of doing good, we cannot prove useless instructors: for while we seriously attend to the real purpose of this ministry, while we labour for this, and only this, our defects will be in some sort supplied by our intentions; the things which we deliver will support themselves, and require neither art nor ornament to recommend them.

Or, however less acceptable may be our labours in this place, God hath distributed his gifts variously, and hath not withheld

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withheld from us the powers and opportunities of edification. The tender mind and dawning understanding are to be formed and cherished: the doctrines of the Gospel are to be conveyed to them with care, with patience, with indulgence; "*precept upon precept, and line upon line, here a little, and there a little.*" And the zealous pastor must surely esteem this an honorable as well as an essential part of his ministerial labour.

BUT amidst all the activity and energy of his public ministry, amidst all the diligence, sincerity and freedom, meekness and boldness of his private instruction, his sincere and ardent solicitude for the salvation of souls is never displayed to more illustrious advantage, than at the bed of the sinner, labouring under the visitations of the Almighty.

Alas! this is no place for the cold or precipitate

vigilance and zeal.

LET us, in the last place, consider how this zeal for the salvation of souls will operate with respect to those "that are *without*," *without* the ministrations of the ministry. When in our public

46 S E R M O N XXIX.

In this land, where our ministry is to be exercised, too considerable a majority of inhabitants are estranged from our communion, or adversaries to our doctrine. And were I to address myself to those, by whose hands our mission is conveyed, I should think it my duty to declare that this situation demands an extraordinary and most scrupulous attention in appointing to the cure of souls: I should, by God's grace, boldly denounce, that God will judge those with a tremendous judgment, who are directed by any but the purest and most religious motives, in discharging this important trust. For us, it is sufficient to observe that this peculiarity of situation should enliven our vigilance and zeal.

As to our protestant brethren of the separation, our zealous concern for the pious discharge of the ministry will not want its effects on them. When in our public

public ordinances "*all things*" are "*done*
 "*to edifying*," they will either be gradu-
 ally reconciled to our communion; or,
 at least, will think favourably of it, not
 with mere charity but with brotherly af-
 fection; and demean themselves with
 that kindness toward us, and reverence
 to our office, which becomes the profes-
 sors of the same religion. God knows
 it is grievous and afflicting that there
 should be any separation among those
 who have one common cause to support,
 and one common enemy to guard against.
 Let us, my brethren, manifest (and if
 any of those who now hear me are ef-
 franged from our doctrine and discipline,
 I include them all in this endearing name,
 and in the spirit of christian meekness
 I exhort them all to manifest) that we
 are not, as we are sometimes said to be,
 political factions, but sincere and religious
 followers of our particular judgments:
 And how to evidence a religious, a truly
 christian

christian principle, how to "*walk worthy*
" of the vocation wherewith" we "*are*
" called," let us learn from the noble,
 the lovely precept, of him who in re-
 ligious knowledge and christian zeal ex-
 ceeded all merely human teachers; from
St. Paul himself. "*With all lowliness,* (thus
" he directs us) and meekness, with long
" suffering, forbearing one another in love;
" endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spi-
" rit in the bond of peace."

As to unbelievers and gainsayers, I
 trust we shall not often have occasion to
 encounter these. Possibly we may have
 more to fear from indifference and in-
 sensibility, than from perverse specula-
 tion. I trust at least that we shall ever
 have the courage to repel the scorn of
 the disputer, and ever be prepared to
" give an answer to every man that
" asketh a reason of the hope that is in
" us." With the confirmed infidel, in-
 deed,

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deed, our intercourse would be hopeless :
It is his character to despise instruction.
With the wavering and doubtful we shall
still retain that authority and reverence
which always attend a sincere zeal for
their salvation, however their opinions
be not conformable to our firm per-
suasion.

BUT the danger to our flocks is at least
more frequent from another quarter.
Popery, that terrible corruption of our
religion, by which we see so many
wretched souls subdued to ignorance and
slavery, is said to have made dreadful
inroads on us. Surely the bare suspicion
of such danger is sufficient to alarm the
most inattentive. What particular course
of conduct should be pursued to guard
against it ; what management to render
the Holy Scriptures more familiar to the
weaker and less informed part of our
flocks ; what modes of easy and whole-

some instruction, zeal and diligence may devise, both for the young and the adult; what authority or persuasion the careful pastor may employ to prevent those dangerous connexions of marriage between persons of different communions, at least to prevent the dismal effects of these connexions on the wretched offspring,—these and the like particulars must be left to the integrity of his heart, and the seriousness of his attention.

Nor doth it seem less difficult to decide how his zeal may be most effectually directed to the conversion of souls from popish darkness. Were the minds of those he is to work on less inaccessible to instruction, were civility and information diffused more generally throughout our land, the task might be easier, and the success more extensive. But the sincerely zealous pastor will distinguish between difficulty and impossibility: And while

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while he exerts his endeavours with prudence and fidelity, will wait the good providence of God for their effect.

It is said indeed, that the temporal encouragements, which our laws offer to conformity, have operated in a manner sufficiently distinguishable. And if men are thus induced seriously to examine the profession in which they have been educated, to attend, to search, to prove, and thus are led to a real conviction of their errors, happy will be the effect both on our civil and religious interests. And the faithful and zealous pastor hath here a noble opportunity to assist and enforce this serious and effectual conviction. He will not be partaker of the mockery and hypocrisy of other men; and therefore, will be careful to introduce a real and well-informed convert to our communion: well-informed, not indeed in every minuteness of theo-

E 2 logical

logical dispute, but in the strong and striking distinctions, too plain to be mistaken, and too important to be slightly regarded : he will watch over his subsequent demeanour with care and tenderness : he will labour, by admonition and instruction, that the reformation of his life shall correspond with that of his profession ; and that a pure and scriptural communion shall appear to have a happier influence, than the devices of superstition and spiritual tyranny. He will not speak comfort to his own indolence, by observing, that the offspring of an insincere convert may prove real members of our communion. The grace of God may indeed operate, though man be faithless and careless. But in the ordinary course of things no such consequence can be expected. The child of ignorance, insensibility, or insincerity, shall have neither precept nor example to form him to a better temper and disposition.

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position. Nurtured in indifference he shall, most likely, prove indifferent, untaught, unprincipled. And such professors of our faith can neither serve the cause of Policy, nor advance the honour of God.

AND now, my brethren! if I have thus far trespassed upon your patience in enforcing the necessity, and displaying the effects of a pure and lively zeal for the service of God's church; the subject is of the utmost moment. And if there needed any collateral motive to recommend it, we might observe, that one common objection to religious establishments, is, that they tend to render the ministry supine and indifferent, by the ease and security which they afford them. Nay it has been but just now publicly asserted*, that because of "the

* *Vid. Blackburne, on the present state of Popery in Great Britain and Ireland.*

"abounding

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"abounding of iniquity" the *"love of many"* among us hath *"waxed cold."*

We are sent to the tabernacles of fanaticism, to mark ' the industry of attention, the impressions of piety made ' on the disciples, and the zeal expressed ' for their salvation ; circumstances, said ' to be worthy our regard and imitation ; ' and a loud call on us of the established ' church to *"take heed to ourselves"* and *"our doctrine;"* to raise a better spirit ' among our people, and to awaken ' both them and ourselves from the ' *slumber of secularity.*'

If there be reproach, let us, my beloved brethren, labour to *"take away the reproach"* of our Israel: knowing the reward of those who *"abound in the work of the Lord:"* giving ourselves wholly to this thing, that our *"profiting may appear unto all:"* being *"an example of believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in*
"faith,

S E R M O N XXIX. 55

"faith, in purity:" drawing near unto God in fervent and constant prayer, for our spiritual governour, for ourselves, and for our brethren, that *"the Grace of our Lord"* may be *"exceeding abundant"* in our hearts: correcting, enlivening, stablishing, strengthening: for *"the perfecting of the saints,"* for *"the work of the ministry,"* for *"the edifying of the body of Christ:"* that *"when the chief Shepherd shall appear"* we may *"receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."*

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, unto him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end!" "Amen."

"Faith, in prayer," drawing near unto
 God in fervent and constant prayer, for
 our spiritual government, for ourselves, and
 for our brethren, that "the Grace of our
 Lord" may be "exceeding abundant"
 in our hearts: adorning, enlivening,
 strengthening: for "the per-
 forming of the faith," for "the work of
 the ministry," for "the edifying of the
 body of Christ," that "when the chief
 Shepherd shall appear," we may "receive
 a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

"Now unto him that is able to do ex-
 ceeding abundantly above all that we ask
 or think, unto him be glory in the Church
 by Christ Jesus throughout all ages,
 to the Father, Amen."

S E R M O N XXX.

Blessedness of turning many to righteousness.

(A Charity Sermon)

Preached at ST. ANN'S, DUBLIN,

November 28, 1773.

DANIEL xii. 3.

*And they that be wise shall shine as the
brightness of the firmament: and they
that turn many to righteousness as the
stars, for ever and ever.*

I CANNOT more powerfully recom-
mend that labour of love to which we
are at this day invited, than by direct-
ing your attention for a moment to
this declaration of the prophet. He
here

58 S E R M O N X X X.

here describes those blessed servants, who, in the great day of the Lord, when the dead have heard his voice, shall be more especially the objects of his grace, and pronounced worthy of an extraordinary degree of happiness and glory. By the words, "*they that be wise,*" we are not to understand the men who have acquired wisdom to confine it to their own advantage; for (as we find it observed in the margin of our bible) the original may be rendered with more exactness and propriety, 'they who are instructors.'

It is to those benevolent spirits then, who, in the elevated language of the patriarch, are "*eyes to the blind;*" to those who, with a fervent zeal for the service of their heavenly father, labour to enlighten the ignorant, to reclaim the wanderer, to rescue the abandoned from sin and misery, to tear them from
the

S E R M O N X X X. 59

the path which leadeth to perdition, to conduct them, to support them, to confirm them in the ways of righteousness; it is to such faithful servants, I say, that the promise of abundant glory is revealed. These are the luminaries of superiour brightness, whose honour and exaltation are to be gloriously distinguished, when all that is stiled honour, and exaltation, and distinction, in this mortal state, shall be utterly effaced and forgotten.

PRECIOUS in the sight of God must that virtue be, to which such splendid promises are annexed: and great indeed are the value and importance of "*turning many to righteousness,*" or, in other words, of a sincere and active solicitude for the spiritual welfare of our fellow-creatures.

It implies a temper fraught with the most generous and amiable of those
prin-

principles which nature approves, which reason recommends, and which it is the purpose of our Christian profession to refine, exalt and perfect.

It implies an ardent zeal for the honour of God, and the advancement of his service. It approves the sincerity of our daily petition, that his will may *"be done on earth, as in heaven:"* for it discovers an anxious concern for the enlargement of God's kingdom, and the establishment of his authority in the hearts of men.

It implies an extensive and well-directed benevolence to our fellow-creatures, a just and generous concern for their dearest and most important interests. In one word, it is the perfection of Christian Charity; a principle superiour to that constitutional sympathy and compassion which prompt us
fo

so powerfully to relieve the occasional wants and distresses of our brethren. With a steady penetration and extensive view, it pierces into futurity; with a deep sense of the truly momentous interests of our fellow-creatures, it consults their happiness, when the fashion of this world hath passed away.

This blessed principle operates in various ways, and is discovered in various instances of good works, according to the talents of those possessed with it. The powerful and opulent, those distinguished by station and abilities, are peculiarly bound to cherish it, and have peculiar opportunities of displaying it. God hath appointed them more particularly as instruments for advancing the welfare of others, both spiritual and temporal. He hath entrusted their good things for this very purpose: yea, and will demand an account of this important

tant trust. They are not distracted or depressed by anxiety for the necessities of the body; they are not called to a painful exercise of the virtues of patience, resignation, and submission to sorrow, want, affliction and oppression. They have leisure to enlarge and extend their views, to consider the interests of society, the necessities of their inferiours, to pursue the means of repressing vice, of promoting godliness, and thus providing for the happiness of their fellow-creatures, and advancing the honour and service of their creator. But no station or condition is excluded from the power, or exempted from the duty of labouring for the salvation of souls.

THERE is no man so untowardly situated in this life, but that he can contribute to instruct the ignorant, to guide those who are wanderers in error, to
*“turn the hearts of the disobedient to the
 “wisdom*

"*wisdom of the just,*" to counsel, to admonish, to reprove, to confirm the weak, to heal the broken hearted, and to comfort the troubled spirit.

BUT there is one instance in which this solicitude for the salvation of souls is displayed, which, at this time, I am particularly bound to recommend to your attention; I mean, the rescuing the young, the helpless and the abandoned, from sloth, from ignorance, from profligacy, from abomination and shame.

Look round you to the several charitable institutions erected in our country, for the truly christian purpose of turning many to righteousness. Think what numbers of wretches have been thus placed in the way of salvation, by a pittance spared from the abundance of our good things. Imagine the collective body of those objects ranged before you.

They

They would tell you, that their souls were ready to perish for lack of knowledge, their bodies ready to consume in sloth and poverty: that hunger and nakedness were the wretched portion of their early days, and before them was the horrid prospect of brutal ignorance and shameless vice; that from this condition they were rescued by the hand of benevolence and christian charity: taught that beginning of wisdom, the fear of the Lord, at a season when this wisdom finds the readiest admission, and sinks deepest into the heart; nourished in the words of sound doctrine; disciplined to sobriety, regularity and diligence, so as to become the riches and the ornament of society, instead of a burden and disgrace: and the united voice, and the appearance of such an assemblage, would be the most powerful and affecting advocates for our little company of orphans.

BUT

BUT I trust they need no advocate. For many years hath this parish bountifully contributed to save the souls of the poor destitute, to add to the general stock of those who have been rescued from perdition, by a tender care of the helpless and abandoned in our own district. Their numbers have been gradually enlarged: the provisions for their welfare gradually encreased. They have not only been instructed: to render this instruction more effectual, to preserve it from being rendered ineffectual by the seduction of evil examples and vitious solicitations, they have been sheltered in an habitation of comfort, order and tranquillity; fed and preserved in health, vigour and discipline; trained and habituated to honest industry, as well as to a godly sense and knowledge of their religious duties. Your bounty hath been expended with the exactest care, and that vigilant inspection and strict eco-

66 SERMON XXX.

nomy, by which alone, with the gracious blessing of Providence, this institution hath been enabled to subsist. We sue to you for a continuance of your bounty, our sole dependance, for a purpose that hath fully answered every reasonable expectation. And blessed be he who hath disposed the hearts of many to begin and to establish this work of loving kindness! And blessed be his name, who, I trust, hath disposed the hearts of many more to support, if not to enlarge and perfect it!

And here I might indulge myself in tracing the amiable features of mercy and compassion. I might lay before you the distresses of the forlorn: I might endeavour, by some affecting representation, to work on that pity and sympathy implanted in the human breast. But the case of these little ones looks not for success by surprizing you into any sud-

S E R M O N XXX. 67

den and transient emotion ; it appeals to reason, to judgment, to experience, to reflection, to the calm, deliberate and steady principle of christian charity. Allow me, therefore, to observe that these times call on us in an especial manner, if we be really solicitous for the honour of God and his service, to be particularly zealous for every institution which promotes the nurture and instruction of the lower orders of our fellow-creatures.

WHATEVER may be the complainings in our streets at this day, we have certainly seen the wealth of this kingdom remarkably encreased, and commerce of many kinds extended to a degree formerly unknown. But, unhappily, these blessings were not duly improved ; and little wonder, therefore, that we should at length experience some diminution of them. Luxury and dissipation have,

within the memory of most of us, made rapid and formidable advances. A course of living hath been introduced (and even spread through those inferior classes of men who are particularly bound to guard against the infection) utterly unfriendly to that christian care due to dependents and domestics.

FAMILY instruction and devotion are duties forgotten and unknown: and yet we affect to wonder, that sobriety, diligence and honesty are rarely to be found in our domestic servants.

BUT while we lie down in the slumber of self-enjoyment, there is an enemy vigilant to sow his tares. The emissaries of popery are active and vigilant. Of late years, they have lifted the head with too great violence to truth and decency against the learned and well instructed; and what must be their practices among the weak and ignorant?

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We know their indefatigable zeal in compassing sea and land to make a proselyte. And have we felt no consequences of our supineness and their vigilance? Are we not every day complaining of the dissolute and profligate in the lower orders of mankind? Are not our ears every moment wounded by their blasphemies and execrations? Is not the peace of our habitations disturbed by their drunkenness and riot? Are not our streets and highways, our retirements and our dwellings, exposed to wretches who lurk in thievish corners to spoil the innocent? And have not our laws been frequently obliged to exert unusual rigour against their outrages? Such are the fruits of unrestrained profligacy and hardened ignorance, together with that dangerous superstition, which teaches to substitute formal confessions, penances and absolutions, in the place of true holiness and righteousness.

EVERY

EVERY provision, therefore, for the instruction of the poor in the doctrines of integrity, of sobriety, diligence and true religion, is a bar against the progress of these evils : so that your charitable contributions are at this day solicited for a purpose no less momentous than that of stemming the torrent of corruption, that of sending forth champions in the cause of truth. For it is no extravagant assertion, that each of those children, whom you thus arm against the world and its dangers, may, in his little sphere, prove no useless champion in this great cause,

It seems neither unreasonable to suppose, nor improbable to expect, that one of those objects of your present bounty, when he hath issued forth in the strength of that christian doctrine here provided for him, and repaid your protection by a diligent, an honest, and a christian life,

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life, may, in his declining years, collect his children round him, and address them in these, or such like words, of exhortation :

‘ I WAS destitute, but God touched the
‘ hearts of his servants, and they became
‘ my parents. They taught me the fear
‘ of God, in my tender years ; they pre-
‘ served me from the slavery of sin, and
‘ defended me against the delusions of
‘ superstition. You reap the fruits of my
‘ early habits of industry, for you are not
‘ destitute. You feel the effects of my
‘ education ; for the precepts of my youth
‘ have been conveyed to you. Teach
‘ them diligently to your children, and
‘ let your children’s children share the in-
‘ estimable blessing. Praise him who
‘ hath dealt graciously with us. Praise
‘ him for those benefactors whose season-
‘ able charity hath been the source of
‘ all our comfort.’

THUS,

Thus, my brethren, shall the generation yet unborn be fed and warmed and instructed, by that small portion of good things which you are prepared to bestow, and for which the blessing of him that was ready to perish cometh upon you, and the widow's heart is at this moment singing for joy.

Every christian assembly, collected in the house of God, is in some sort an epitome of human life. We are here distinguished by our several ranks, conditions and occupations, rich and poor, noble and undignified, in various degrees of eminence and subordination. To the poor, we cannot plead the cause of the poor, but with reluctance: Yet few, it is to be hoped, there are, who cannot spare some pittance to the good work of this day. And God looks not to the greatness of their donation. They whose souls

souls he hath satisfied with abundance, will, I trust, demonstrate upon this occasion, that the gracious giver is not forgotten, nor the gracious purposes for which he hath bestowed his gifts.

By appearing in the congregation, they in effect profess, that they are not to be ranked with those inconsiderate spirits, and hardened hearts, that are equally insensible to the interests of society and the wants of their fellow-creatures: they acknowledge that their good things are not to be entirely devoted to self-enjoyment: such persons, therefore, we may justly hope, will be cheerful givers. Nor are our expectations less from those whom God hath placed in the middle orders of life

We, my brethren, sometimes imitate the errors and vie with the luxury
of

of our superiours. Let us this day imitate their loving-kindness, and vie with their well-directed bounty. We know the evils which proceed from the want of timely nurture, and early habits of industry and religion; for our conditions, and occupations give us constant opportunities of observing them. Nor are we so far removed from the general dangers and distresses of humanity, as to shut our eyes and hearts against those of our inferiours.

When we look round through the several charitable institutions of this city, the provisions made for the maimed and infirm, for the wretch bereft of reason, for the woman labouring in travail, for the orphans of those who have served their country by land or sea, for all the numerous calamities to which this life is exposed, we find the very foundations of
most

SERMON XXX. 75

most of these owing to the generous and humane attention of the middle orders of men.

IF extraordinary distress, or any new devices for relief of the distressed, call forth the spirit of mercy and charity, we find them first to approve themselves zealous in provoking one another to love and to good works. On occasions like the present, where have we found the most liberal contributions? Where have the collections borne the greatest proportion to the abilities of those who communicate? In such congregations (for the truth must be acknowledged) as are composed of men whom God hath placed in the middle orders of life.

To these, therefore, we apply with cheerfulness and confidence, no less than to the great and affluent. And from all
of

of every order, we look for that liberality by which all who are merciful after their power shall be equally accepted in the sight of God.

AND beware of that contracted and unchristian spirit which some men bring with them into the house of God, even upon occasions like the present. Something they come resolved to contribute, but it is from decency, from compliance with the importunity of their neighbour, or some worldly motive. These charitable institutions are not, possibly, conducted agreeably to their notions of propriety. They do not produce so much good as they expect. But these notions of propriety may be lightly and erroneously formed; and these expectations of good may be unreasonable and extravagant. If establishments of this kind admit of improvement, such improvement

SERMON XXX. 77

ment must be derived, not from a contribution made grudgingly or of necessity, but from chearful, bountiful and zealous givers, such as God loveth and man bleffeth. And when we have done all that christian charity requires, the good effects are secret, gradual, not glaring and ostentatious; yet certain and permanent, and important, unless the interests of society, and the salvation of souls, be matters of slight concern.

But we may be told, by the affecters of discernment and penetration, 'These exhortations are but of course; the usual, repeated, formal language of the place. We have determined on the measure of our bounty, and it is presumption to expect that we could be influenced to encrease it.' Have you indeed determined? I trust then you have not called in your appetites, your passions, your pride, your vanity, your love

love of riches, or your love of pleasure, as your counsellors. In vain could we encounter these by the voice of a miserable creature : but it is not the voice of a miserable creature that now calls upon you—It is the voice of our Heavenly Father and Master : It is the voice of our Redeemer, who laid down his life for us ; who in return for mercies unutterable, demands, and will accept our bounty to the least of these his brethren. In his name, and by his authority, do these little ones now stand before you, and lift their hands for protection. To your hearts, to your consciences, to your reason, to your religion, we commend them and their affecting cause.

AND now, my brethren, unite with me I beseech you in one fervent application to the father of the fatherless :

‘ GRACIOUS

SERMON XXX. 79

‘ GRACIOUS and merciful Lord God,
‘ stir up, we beseech thee, the wills of
‘ thy faithful people! Enliven our affec-
‘ tions! Accept our charitable endea-
‘ vours! And, while these tender plants
‘ are watered by our bounty, do thou
‘ vouchsafe the due encrease, to thy own
‘ glory, and to our salvation, through
‘ Jesus Christ our Lord.

PENITENT WOMEN.

ON SUNDAY the 17th of MARCH, 1775.

*Published at the Request of the Free-Parishioners,
Gleaners and Guardians of the Charity.*

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Gracious and merciful Lord God,
 lift up we beseech thee, the wills of
 thy faithful people! Borne out thou
 thyself! Accept our charitable con-
 fessions! And, while these tender pleas
 are watered by our poverty, do thou
 vouchsafe the due charity, to thy own
 glory, and to our salvation, through
 Jesus Christ our Lord.

And thus, beloved, you see
 the application of our prayer, and
 the blessed fruit of the Father's love.

Gracious

S E R M O N XXXI.

T H E

Christian's Duty to Offenders,

PREACHED AT THE

CHAPEL in LEESON-STREET, DUBLIN,

BEFORE THE

GOVERNESSES AND GUARDIANS

OF THE

A S Y L U M

F O R

P E N I T E N T W O M E N,

On SUNDAY the 12th of MARCH, 1775.

*Published at the Request of the Vice-Patronesses,
Governesses and Guardians of the Charity.*

Vol. III.

G

S E R M O N . XXXI.

T H E

Christian's Duty to Offenders,

PREACHED AT THE

CHAPEL IN LEESON-STREET, DUBLIN,

BEFORE THE

GOVERNESSES AND GUARDIANS

OF THE

A S Y L U M

F O R

PRISONER WOMEN.

ON SUNDAY the 1st of MARCH, 1775.

Published at the Request of the Vice-Patronesses,
Governesses and Guardians of the Charity.

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Vol. III.

T O

The Right Rev. Doctor William Newcome,

Lord Bishop of Ossory ;

From sincere Respect to an amiable private Character,

And a distinguished Attachment to

The Interests of Religion and Learning,

This S E R M O N

(Published at the Request of that Meeting in which he presided)

Is inscribed,

By his Lordship's affectionate

And most obedient Servant,

THOMAS LELAND.

T O

The Right Rev. Doctor William Nevins,

Lord Bishop of Otago:

From former Bishop to an amiable private character,

and a distinguished Attachment to

The interests of Religion and Learning,

THIS SERMON

(Published at the Request of that Meeting in which he preached)

Is inscribed,

By his Lordship's affectionate

And most obedient Servant,

THOMAS LELAND.

S E R M O N XXXI.

The Christian's Duty to Offenders.

*Preached at the Chapel in LEESON-STREET,
DUBLIN, before the Governesses and Guar-
dians of the Asylum for penitent Women,
on Sunday the 12th of March, 1775.*

I THESSALONIANS, chap. v. verse 14.

*We exhort you, brethren, warn them that
are unruly; comfort the feeble-minded;
support the weak; be patient towards all
men.*

THIS exhortation is conceived in the
truly amiable spirit of christianity. It
points out our duty to offending brethren
clearly and forcibly: a duty, which the
place

place and purpose of our assembling naturally recall to our attention. Nor can I more effectually recommend that labour of love to which we are this day invited, than by dwelling for a while upon the precepts of the text, and leading you to reflect upon their import and consequence.

"We exhort you, brethren," saith the apostle. We urge it as your bounden duty, as an essential part of christian charity, *"warn them that are unruly."* Look not with indifference on those who walk unworthy of their vocation: be solicitous and zealous for reforming them. Abhor their vitious practices; and shrink from every the most distant danger of pollution; *"hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."* But consider the value of an immortal soul. Think for what glorious purposes the offenders were created and redeemed. *"Of some have* *"compassion,*

“*compassion, making a difference,*” distinguishing their several degrees of guilt, and treating them with the lenity or severity suited to their different circumstances. But condescend even to the profligate; display before them all their vileness and danger; press them with the terrours of the Lord; soften them with the recollection of his mercies; employ every motive, improve every circumstance that may pierce them with a sense of their transgressions. Thus shall ye discover a zealous concern for the glory of God, a benevolent attention to the most momentous interests of your fellow-creatures, an anxious solicitude for their honour and exaltation, and happiness, when all that is called honour, and exaltation, and happiness, in this world, hath vanished like the morning cloud.

SINNERS,

SINNERS, thus impressed with a fearful sense of guilt, are naturally confounded and dismayed ; their minds distracted, their thoughts dissipated, their terrors violent, with no determined purpose, no prospect of relief, no resource or consolation, but “ *a fearful looking for of judgment.*” But to little purpose have we laboured, if the offender be awakened to a feeling of his danger, merely to confound and distract him. No ! christian charity must interpose again, and “ *comfort the feeble-minded ;*” rouse them from despondency, from terror and distraction ; point out their true source of consolation ; affectionately entreat them to put away the evil of their doings ; remind them, that “ *although their sins be as scarlet, they shall become as white as snow ;*” that “ *the Lord will have mercy upon his afflicted ;*” and that Christ is “ *the propitiation for their sins.*”

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THE wounded spirit is thus healed and enlivened; and the transgressor, duly encouraged and directed, will seek that reconciliation which he finds not yet desperate; and labour to obtain that pardon, which, he learns, the long-suffering of God is still ready to bestow. And blessed be that loving-kindness which is thus successfully employed in the salvation of souls! Yea, and great is their reward, and glorious their distinction in the day of the Lord, who thus "*turn many to righteousness!*"

BUT the law of christian charity is not yet fulfilled. The state of those, who have just ceased to do evil, and are now learning to do well, is oftentimes a state of dangerous and bitter conflict. Returning sinners, how sincere soever, and lively in their repentance, have still their depravities to subdue; are still to contend against the force of habit; and ha-
bit

bit doth not yield at once to conviction and reflection. In a path to which they have been unaccustomed, they cannot walk securely—They are, therefore, still the objects of compassion. We are to “*support the weak.*”—We are to regard their case, as that of a friend just rescued from a dangerous and wasting malady. The virulence of the disorder may be subdued; but langour and danger still remain. We are every moment to apprehend a relapse, and to guard against it by a scrupulous caution, and regimen apparently severe. Appetites may be craving, and desires irregular; but these must be obstinately controuled. Indulgence might prove a snare even to the strong; but must be fatal to the wretch just snatched from death. It is therefore a necessary part of christian charity to guard, to assist, and to support those who still labour under the remains of spiritual malady; to attend them with
an

an affectionate care, to secure them against the danger of falling away, to lead them gently and cautiously to a full recovery, from strength to strength, until they be enabled to walk in the full vigour and security of the upright.

And lastly; in this exercise of compassion to the offending, we are to “*be patient towards all men.*”—We are to proceed in the spirit of that heavenly endowment, which “*suffereth long, and is kind,*” which “*hopeth all things,*” and “*endureth all things;*” temperate, indulgent, and affectionate; not readily provoked, nor lightly discouraged; diligent in our endeavours, calmly waiting the event; faithful to our duty of “*planting*” or of “*watering,*” but ever bearing in mind that it is God “*which giveth the increase;*” and patiently expecting the influence of his spirit.—The depravity of mankind may be grievous; but we,
miserable

miserable offenders, must bear with this depravity. We ourselves, alas ! are eminent examples of the long-suffering of God : in us, it would be hideous insolence not to be long-suffering to our brethren. Sinners may be weak, ignorant, irresolute or obdurate ; so that the sincerest and most ardent solicitude for their reformation may frequently prove unsuccessful. But our hopes are not to be resigned, nor our efforts relaxed by disappointment. The good derived from them may not always correspond with our expectations : but our expectations may be unreasonable : and the smallest portion of good produced is infinitely more than adequate to all our labours.

SUCH is the duty of a Christian to his offending brethren. For I have endeavoured to deliver the doctrine of the Gospel plainly and ingenuously, without
straining

straining or adapting it to any particular purpose. I might have considered this duty more extensively; pointed out the persons more especially obliged to practise it; the circumstances in which it is particularly to be exercised; the rules of christian prudence by which it should be regulated; and the fervour of religious zeal with which we should discharge it. But the present occasion admits only of this plain detail; and I trust it will plead forcibly in favour of the charitable institution we are now invited to support.

If the guardians of this house cannot always seek and warn the unruly, the wretched objects of their care need no warning. Infamy, and poverty, and misery have been their instructors. Rejected and forlorn, afflicted and unpitied, crouching under the heavy burden of iniquity, they pour out their tears before
these

these doors for refuge.—‘ Snatch us from
‘ perdition ; cover us from reproach ;
‘ save us from the horrid consequences
‘ of our misdoings.’ When anguish and
remorse utter such piercing cries, would
to God ! the conductors of this charity
could open their arms to every peni-
tent.

So many as they have been enabled
to receive,—and their numbers cannot
be deemed inconsiderable, unless we form
our judgments from the similar institu-
tion of a neighbouring kingdom, in opu-
lence greatly our superiour, in benevolence
surpassed by none— So many, I say, as
they have been enabled to receive, have
here found refuge from sin and sorrow :
a refuge originally devised and provided
by a zealous and steady principle of
loving-kindness, not discouraged by the
cautious and severe, not disconcerted by
the levity of heedless censure, or the
wanton-

wantonness of scorn and ridicule. And happily, the friends of this establishment are now enabled to silence all cold and captious objections by the uncontrouled force of facts; all surmise, suspicion and speculation, by the irresistible argument of experience.

WHILE the scrupulous have objected, they have executed their christian design: while the timid have foreseen numberless dangers and inconveniences, they have neglected and refuted their forebodings. They said, with the wise man, "*He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.*" They cast their bread upon the waters with a patient confidence, hoping and waiting the effect of their pious cares. They have instructed those who felt but their temporal miseries, and knew not the depths of wretchedness to which they had been plunged: enlightening

lightening their understandings, and teaching the insensible and uninstructed to see and know the shamefulnes of their abominations. They have comforted those feeble-minded who felt and abhorred their odious degradation, but doubted of the possibility of a recovery. They have displayed before them the treasures of God's mercies; recalled and conducted them to the paths of purity and piety; strengthened "*the weak hands*" and "*the feeble knees*;" taught, exhorted, watched, reprov'd, entreated, encouraged, given them new thoughts and affections, trained them to new habits: and in this "*patient continuance in well doing*," have borne with the forward, the obdurate, and the back-sliding; not discouraged by some instances of ill success; knowing the force of depravity; and blessing God for the far greater number who have fully repaid their labours, by that lively repentance and steadfast

refor-

reformation, which oftentimes succeed
the most deplorable and apparently des-
perate transgression.

If there be christian charity, surely
these are its genuine effusions. If those
souls which Christ purchased be of va-
lue, then is this work worthy of the
creature, and precious in the sight of
God.

Some former advocates for this insti-
tution have employed their abilities in
encountering objections, and attempts to
depreciate it. This is indeed honoura-
ble to their zeal and solicitude for ob-
viating every possible suggestion of the
weak, the rigid, or disingenuous; but, I
trust, can scarcely, now, be deemed ne-
cessary for the fair and reasonable en-
quirer. Good God! shall we be told
that vice will be encouraged by a scheme
for restraining and reforming it? That

female weakness will be seduced, not by gaiety and flattery, not by visions of pleasure, but by a distant prospect of tears, and sighs, and solitude, and discipline, and toil, and penitence? Shall we be gravely assured, that notwithstanding every provision for the broken and contrite heart, yet numbers still continue hardened and abandoned? Alas! this is an undeniable and a melancholy truth. But what follows? Are we therefore not to receive and foster the returning prodigal? Is it asserted that all the objects of your care are poor and ignorant, the lowest of those orders which the pride of man calls mean and vulgar? Let the falsehood remain in full credit: you are not concerned to detect it. If this were really the case, are they therefore less the objects of a Christian's care? Is it at this day alledged that your benevolence hath been misplaced and ineffectual?—Look to the assembly

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assembly of penitents now supported by your bounty: their orderly and promising demeanour confutes the invidious assertion. Enquire after those numbers you have restored to society. Their conduct bears witness against it: the sincerity and constancy of all those who have fled from guilt and shame to the most distant regions of the earth, who have sheltered themselves from the allurements of vice in poverty and servitude, silence and confound it.

Nothing but a miraculous influence could crown your endeavours in every single instance with full success. But when it appears, that notwithstanding the inveteracy of evil habits, yet of ninety-two persons whose reformation hath been attempted, sixteen only can be recounted, whose relapse hath disappointed the purposes of this institution, let us bless the gracious giver of every

good and perfect gift, who hath vouchsafed an harvest so encouraging to our future labours.

And shall it be said, that by supporting this institution we divert the streams of charity from the honest indigent to enrich the vicious and the profligate? God forbid! It is not to the vicious and the profligate that your arms are extended. It is to those who shrink with horror from the ways of vice and profligacy; who still promise to return useful members to society; whom the father of mercies hath pronounced to be still the objects of his favour. And what God hath accepted, let not sinful man presume to treat with scorn and severity.

A LITTLE more, my brethren, spared from your abundance, a small additional pittance denied to vanity and self-enjoyment, to pride and ostentation, to any

S E R M O N XXXI. for

of those various passions which give wings to the riches of this world, would silence all unreasonable murmurings at the bounty you here bestow. But I am not now to prescribe what you should grant or deny on other occasions. Your consciences, your reason, and your religion, must be your guides on all. And to your consciences, your reason, and your religion, we now appeal. They will prove powerful advocates for these unhappy females.

It were neither equitable nor liberal to attempt any invidious comparison between the merits of different charitable institutions. But let us at least suppose one of those wretched outcasts, to whom these hospitable doors cannot be yet opened, without further aid, were to appear before you; and with streaming eyes, and trembling hands and accents, to plead her own affecting cause.

WITH

WITH confusion and distraction she
 would confess her vileness. Her falter-
 ing voice, her suffocating sighs, would
 speak the anguish of her spirit. But,
 ‘Obnoxious as I have been,’ thus might
 she plead boldly, ‘yet I am a fellow-
 creature, and a fellow-christian: par-
 taker of the same nature, however I
 have unhappily debased it; graced with
 the same endowments, however I have
 been tempted to abuse them; and still,
 by God’s long-suffering, heir of the
 same promise, though too long insen-
 sible of its value. Look not with se-
 verity upon my offences, for you are
 yourselves offenders. Cast me not
 away, for God doth not cast the peni-
 tent away. Turn not from me with
 abhorrence; for you know not by what
 artifice, by what flattery, by what
 treacherous devices, my inexperienced,
 untutored, unprotected, unsuspecting
 youth is thus plunged into the depths
 of

of shame and sorrow. You extend
 your bounty to the widow and the
 orphan, and the destitute; and God
 will graciously accept it. But the
 condition of the widow and the or-
 phan and the destitute, is happiness
 compared with mine. Their consola-
 tion is nigh; and the day at hand
 when God shall comfort them. I am
 threatened with that misery which
 knows no end. The gulph of ever-
 lasting wrath opens to receive me.
 Snatch me from the jaws of eternal
 death. If I be detected in my foul-
 ness, hide me: If I be ignorant, in-
 struct me: if not completely recon-
 ciled to the ways of innocence and
 peace, save me from myself, comfort
 my feebleness of mind, support my
 weakness. Or if my native abhor-
 rence of pollution hath, in my ten-
 der years, been overcome by the inde-
 fatigable practices of the licentious, if
 my

'my destroyer stands unabashed before
 'you, if he be received and counte-
 'nanced, at least make some atonement
 'for this unreasonable partiality. Let
 'not the wretched victim of his lizen-
 'tiousness be excluded from all pity.
 'Though her ignorance hath been
 'abused, her weakness conquered, and
 'her affection betrayed, yet give some
 'shelter to her shame, some relief to her
 'affliction. Teach her to support a
 'wasted frame in the ways of honesty.
 'Let her languid eye once more brighten
 'with some gleam of hope. Restore
 'her to God; and grant her to return
 'to her fellow-creatures without new re-
 'proach.'

ym AND what inestimable value do we
 -stamp on that pittance of good things,
 -bestowed, to restore what God created
 -amiable, to enlarge the glorious king-
 -dom of Christ Jesus, and to encrease the

joy of the ten thousand times ten thousand that surround the throne of God! But perhaps there is little need to enforce the excellence of this institution. Many of those who hear me, have cherished and protected it from its infant state, watched its progress and effects, and bear witness to its success; aid it cheerfully, and recommend it confidently. If then there be no occasion to enliven your charity, let me at least attempt to promote in some degree the gracious purposes for which you are prepared to bestow your bounty. And with this view I now address myself to the present objects of your bounty; earnestly entreating the serious attention of each to a few plain words of exhortation.

MY SISTER!

God hath dealt graciously with you. Behold what guardians and benefactors he hath raised you; what

what glorious instruments of his mercy? They have snatched you, as a brand from the fire. Alas! there are reasons why your soul should be impressed with the deepest and tenderest sense of this blessing. Embrace it thankfully; improve it diligently. Your task of reformation is commenced. It may not at first be pleasing: but perseverance will gradually smooth the path you tread. The turbulence of distempered passions will subside; and the comfort of innocence and a good conscience compose all remains of distraction, like that spirit of God, which moved upon the face of the waters, and regulated the disorders of the material world.

HOWEVER rescued from the depths of corruption, you are still weak. And if he who standeth should take heed lest he fall, you, who totter, should take more abundant heed. Submit yourself
 12477 with

with chearfulness to the discipline prescribed to you : listen with humility to the instruction provided for you : seize the present blessed opportunity of nurture and admonition, perhaps the last and only trial which providence hath decreed for you ; and with ten-fold assiduity improve every moment of this day of salvation.

Do you at any time feel the slightest disposition to return to your former course? Open the word of God, for it is here provided for your instruction, and learn the dreadful state of those who *“ turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.”* Hear the tremendous declaration of the Apostle, in the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews. *“ It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost ; and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of
“ the*

*"the world to come ; if they fall away,
 "to renew them again unto repentance."*

The sentence is indeed immediately denounced against those, who having been instructed and baptized into the faith, and having received the extraordinary gifts of the spirit, denied their religion formally, and returned to Gentile darkness. But it is applicable to every professor of Christianity. You have been enlightened, you have tasted of God's mercies, you have been visited by his spirit, you have weighed the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, and have forsaken the ways of darkness. Were you again to fall away, and to be entangled in your former pollutions, it is impossible, (not strictly so, for God's mercies are boundless, but exceedingly difficult, and in the usual course of things not to be expected) that you should be renewed again unto repentance. The reason is plain. You have experienced
 God's

God's mercies, and renounced them: you have known the terrors of his wrath, and defied them. There are now no motives to influence you, but those you have rejected and despised. Should you even recall and revolve them, they return faint and enfeebled: the enemy hath already conquered them: his strength is increased: it is therefore more than probable that he must again conquer them. Observe then, and weigh it I conjure you carefully, that your eternal happiness or misery must be decided by the firmness or frailty of your present resolutions.

AND to an awful dread of again offending God, add a grateful reverence for those benefactors who have been the instruments of his precious mercy. To a lively abhorrence of all past abominations, add compassion and forbearance and affection to your companions in penitence:

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nitence : exhort them, comfort them, encourage them with gentleness and mildness, with gravity and meekness, by counsel, by instruction, and by example. Thus shall you approve the sincerity of your conversion. And when restored to the world, an edifying instance of the benevolence and wisdom of your benefactors, you shall; yourself, contribute in some sort to this excellent institution, to which you owe your happiness, by justifying and encouraging the bounty of your superiours.

AND may the merciful Lord God, who desireth not the death of a sinner, dispose the hearts of all to extend this bounty with cheerfulness and confidence ! May his grace render it effectual to the salvation of souls !—It is received with the blessing of her that was ready to perish everlastingly. And do thou, O ! gracious inspirer of all holy thoughts,

S E R M O N XXXI. 111

thoughts, and purposes of loving kindness, enliven our affections; and while thy creatures grant a portion of those good things thou hast bestowed, to "turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," bless the seed which they have sown; and in thy good time give the due encrease, to thy own glory, and to our salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God.

W HATEVER of exhortation or instruction may be deduced from these words, we are first to consider the purpose and occasion of them.

Youth.

I

When

S E R M O N XXXII.

*On the Neglect of Religion and true
Happiness.*

Preached at St. ANNE'S, DUBLIN.

ST. JOHN, chap. vi. verses 67, 68, 69.

*Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye
also go away?*

*Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord,
to whom shall we go? Thou hast the
words of eternal life.*

*And we believe, and are sure, that thou
art that Christ, the Son of the Living
God.*

WHATEVER of exhortation or in-
struction may be deduced from these
words, we are first to consider the pur-
pose and occasion of them.

VOL. III.

I

WHEN

WHEN our Lord had fed the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, the first impression of this miracle was naturally forcible. The people concluded, that as, like Moses, he had fed them in the wilderness, he must be that prophet which God had promised to raise up among their brethren, like to their law-giver; and that by him they were to be delivered from the Romans, as their fathers had been from Egypt. They were therefore earnest to make him king. And although this sudden zeal was as suddenly allayed, on our Lord's retiring from their view, yet the people still sought him, and crowded round him; not because they had "*seen the miracle,*" but, as he who knew their hearts, declared, because they "*did eat of the loaves, and were filled;*" and hoping to be again supplied, in the same stupendous manner,

SERMON XXXII. 115

OBSERVE then, that our Lord frequently takes occasion to illustrate and enforce his doctrine by allusions and similitudes taken from the immediate occasion of his preaching, and the incidents and occurrences in which he was engaged. Thus to the Samaritan woman who drew water from the well at Sichar : “ *If thou knewest,*” saith he, “ *the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water :*” that is, the revelation of God’s will and word, as refreshing to the soul as water to the thirsty ; and which he calls “ *a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life,*” a perpetual fountain of spiritual comfort and everlasting joy.

So to the multitude that now surrounded him, in expectation of being again fed ; “ *Labour not,*” said he, “ *for*

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*“the meat which perisheth, but for that
 “meat which endureth to everlasting life,
 “which the Son of man shall give unto
 “you; for him hath God the Father
 “sealed.”* Take not so much care for
 the sustenance of your body, as for the
 spiritual food which shall sustain, and
 enable you to live happily when this life
 shall be no more. This hath the Father
 empowered me to bestow, as he hath
 demonstrated by the miracles ye have
 seen me work, and they, as it were, set
 his seal to confirm and authenticate my
 commission. Again, he said, *“I am the
 “bread of life;”* and *“the bread of God
 “is he that cometh down from heaven,
 “and giveth life unto the world.”* Such
 figurative expressions seem difficult to be
 mistaken; yet appear to have been mis-
 taken by the corrupt and prejudiced.
 Yet our Lord thought it proper, in con-
 tinuing his discourse, to use the same
 figure, even with greater boldness.—
 silt s I “The

S E R M O N XXXII. 117

*"The bread that I will give is my flesh,
" which I will give for the life of the
world;"* alluding not only to his general
doctrine, but to his laying down his life
for the salvation of mankind. And
again, *"Except ye eat the flesh of the
" Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have
" no life in you."* That is, except ye
be partakers of that sacrifice of my body
and blood, which I am to offer, embrace
my terms of salvation, and acknowledge
me as your master and only Saviour, ye
have no spiritual life, no covenanted
title to immortality.

SUCH a doctrine, so delivered, was
disappointing and distasteful. Had our
Lord assured them that he was sent to
deliver their nation from temporal sub-
jection; that he would give them the
heathen for an inheritance; that all their
worldly enemies should be bruised and
broken; and all their carnal desires and
sensual

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sensual passions freely and fully gratified; they would have heard him gladly. But now, with disgust and contempt, they turned away from this teacher of hard sayings. Many, even of his more immediate followers, disappointed, or detected in their insincerity, walked no more with him. "*Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?*" Ye who are as free either to accept or to reject my doctrine as these men. "*Then Simon Peter,*" generally the most forward to express his zeal, "*answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?*" What other teacher shall we find, what other guide to life and immortality, if we forsake thee? We have not misconceived thy sayings, or wrested them to any false or carnal sense. We know the real purport of all thou hast delivered; that "*thou hast the words of eternal life;*" that thou alone teachest that doctrine which is our sure direction to immortal

happi-

happiness. And *“ we believe, and are
“ sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son
“ of the living God :”* by attending to
the sure word of prophecy, by seeing
thy mighty works, and hearing thy di-
vine doctrine, we are convinced and
believe firmly, that thou art the promised
Messias, the son of God, the author
and giver of life, and of eternal life to
all that believe in thee.

SUCH are the import and occasion of
these words. It is my present purpose
to press them home upon the hearts and
consciences of those who hear me this
day.

WE see then, my brethren, the inef-
timable value of that holy religion we
profess, and in which we have been
nurtured. It leads us to the attainment
of immortal happiness when this world
shall be no more; and this by an uner-
ring

ring guide, ordained and sent to dwell among us for this purpose, and vested with every character of divine authority. To be stedfast and immoveable in the hope of our calling, and to strain every effort for the blessings of our inheritance, are the natural returns, on our part, for a dispensation of such stupendous mercy. Yet the general desertion of our Lord, by the blind, the corrupt and insincere, is not, alas! without its parallel at present. The ignorant and superstitious still mistake his doctrine: the proud and presumptuous reject and renounce it: the sensual and carnal fly to other objects and engagements: and the pleasures and interests of mortality are eagerly pursued, while those of a future and eternal life are but lightly regarded. Should they ever force their way upon the mind, they are dismissed at once, as intruders too offensive to be entertained. I speak of what we generally observe, and what strikes

strikes us with greatest force ; for the glorious instances of christian integrity and perseverance, which I trust are frequently to be found, generally lie concealed from us. We see only the busy faces, the pantings of heart, the eagerness and assiduity, the cares and toils of the worldly-minded, the slavery of the covetous and ambitious, the stupefaction of the sensual, and the brutal degradation of all those who seek their happiness, where God hath not appointed the happiness of man.

We need not extend our view beyond the narrow circle in which we are immediately engaged. We are surrounded on all sides by the careless and inattentive ; by those who turn their ear from the words of eternal life ; and those who confine their desires and pursuits to a wretched pittance of worldly gain, or vanity or pleasure. Even the appearance
of

of this our religious assembly affords a melancholy proof, that our Master and Saviour is forsaken, and his word despised, or shamefully neglected. If we cast our eyes round us, where do we find the men of worldly greatness and renown? They deign not to unite with their fellow christians in public prayer and adoration, on the day peculiarly appointed for this service. Whither have our lawgivers or statesmen fled? They are not found among us. Or our men of liberal professions and occupations? We see no spark of their light, which should shine gloriously before men. They would be ashamed to be thought disengaged from worldly business, in the hour of prayer. Others plead the fatigue of worldly cares and occupations, and convert the Lord's day into a day of recreation and amusement. Others, again, overpowered with all the harrassments of vitious or frivolous society,

S E R M O N XXXII. 123

ciety, are now sunk down in sloth, seeking some rest from the severity of their toils, and such relief for their enfeebled faculties, as may again enable them to run the same course of shame and guilt.

EVEN among those who have not yet forsaken the assembling themselves together—But in this place, let there be no appearance of rash and uncharitable judgment. Let me but entreat those who hear me, to examine their hearts seriously and impartially, to consider with what thoughts and affections and dispositions they have resorted to the congregation, and attended to our religious exercises : whether with a reverent and awful sense of that duty in which they were to engage, divested for a time of all worldly cares and concerns, and possessed with a deep impression of that adorable presence in which they stand :
whether

whether they bow down with reverence, and lift, not their hands only, but their hearts, warmed with true piety, and exalted by devotion : or whether they have appeared before the Lord, and trod the courts of his house, from form or worldly decency, cold, lifeless, uncollected, with minds still possessed by the world, distracted by those scenes of business, or of pleasure, from which they have reluctantly torn themselves for a moment, and to which they are impatient to return. My brethren ! if in these particulars our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and discerns, with an unerring eye, the shameful desertion of his service, however concealed from the eye of man, or from our own, by a fair exterior. He knoweth and discerneth how the word of exhortation is at this moment received, whether with reverence and humility, or with scorn or indifference, and listless impatience to be relieved

relieved from the tedious and tasteless speaker.

Now, of all those who forsake the service of their heavenly father, it is the cold and indifferent who retain the form, without the vital spirit of religion, whom we are particularly to exhort; for they are most likely to receive, and to be wrought upon by exhortation. To these then, and indeed to all alike, those who have yielded to the seducements of the world, and those who contend against them; to the faithful follower of our Lord, and to the heartless, reluctant and insincere, to all alike, I say, the zealous and affectionate answer of Saint Peter is to be earnestly recommended: "*Lord! to whom shall we go?*"—Let every individual who hears me address this question to his heart: "Shall I resort to the gain-sayer and unbeliever? Comfortless, alas! are his affected speculations. He
 ' assures

' assures me, that after a fleeting pe-
 ' riod of unsatisfying and disgusting pur-
 ' suits, there is no hope, no consol-
 ' ation, but that I am for ever to lie
 ' down with the beast that perishes : a
 ' doctrine intolerable to that exalted
 ' spirit ; insupportably mortifying to
 ' those enlivened and aspiring thoughts,
 ' and vast desires, I feel within me. Or
 ' shall I carelessly resign myself to temp-
 ' tation, and rush headlong into the
 ' ways of vice and folly ? Remorse and
 ' self-reproach, anguish and vexation,
 ' shame and confusion are in their
 ' ways, and everlasting degradation and
 ' destruction are the end of their pur-
 ' suits. Or, without the more violent
 ' outrages on decency, shall I confine
 ' my desires to this world, and its less
 ' offensive pursuits ? Alas ! the service of
 ' the world is slavery, and its wages
 ' disappointment. Let the ambitious la-
 ' bour through their course of care and
 ' toil

' toil and envy, and strife, of pride
 ' wounded, expectation defeated, success
 ' hardly obtained, and oftentimes the
 ' bitterest aggravation of their sorrows.
 ' Let the man of elegance and pleasure
 ' weary himself amidst his frivolous
 ' engagements, 'till langour and distaste
 ' weigh down his powers, and remorse
 ' and self-abhorrence wring the wretched
 ' heart that conceals its torture under
 ' the false appearance of gaiety and ease.
 ' Away from me all deceitful vanities!
 ' To God will I look up, and to the
 ' Saviour of mankind will I cleave sted-
 ' fastly. Thou, O Lord! "*hast the words*
 ' "*of eternal life.*" Thy doctrine and
 ' thy covenant alone enable me to re-
 ' gard the interests of this world with
 ' due indifference; to extract from them
 ' whatever of real value they afford, but
 ' to exalt my desires to something tran-
 ' scendently greater and more glorious.
 ' Thou teachest me to look without ter-
 ' rour

' rour upon death, that tyrant of the
 ' worldly-minded, but to the christian a
 ' sure refuge from the pains and toils of
 ' his present period, and the passage to a
 ' transporting scene of joy, which thou
 ' hast purchased and prepared for us, and
 ' taught us to obtain, when the pursuits
 ' and pleasures and vanities of this mor-
 ' tal state shall vanish like the morning
 ' vapour !'

THE unutterably superiour value of
 this final lot of our inheritance is so
 striking, that it admits of no proof or
 enforcement. It flashes irresistibly upon
 us: But though we cannot withstand its
 impression, we can turn away to other
 objects; and, if our deeds are vain or
 evil, fly from that light which discovers
 them. Herein indeed we deal deceit-
 fully with ourselves: for the proper ob-
 ject of immortal creatures is the enjoy-
 ment of an immortal existence. And
 how-

however our senses may be now possessed and allured, yet all that this world can afford, how well applied soever, is but a preparation for that better state, which may be truly called our life.

BUT it is not sufficient to acknowledge this great leading truth. It should be considered and revolved, frequently presented to the mind, and contemplated with that seriousness and earnestness of attention which suit its vast importance. This is the more necessary, as we are neither commanded, nor permitted to retire to any total seclusion from the world and its concerns. The christian hath his active course of duty here appointed to him. But hence he is in danger of being totally overwhelmed by worldly objects, unless his mind be frequently recalled to things of greater value. In the daily occurrences of life we may observe, or perhaps we are ourselves, terrible examples,

of that severity of care and toil endured, or even gladly embraced, from a precarious expectation of temporal advantages : and that he who turns his ear from the words of eternal life, hangs with the utmost anxiety of attention upon all those unsubstantial promises which the world presents to his imagination. And the ordinary course of human affairs, in the days of our Lord, and in the place of his ministry, was precisely the same which we at present find it. Hence, in the chapter from which the text is taken, and in other passages of the Gospel, we find him conveying a particular point of instruction, plain, but necessary to be inculcated frequently, and impressed deeply : that the pains taken, for the welfare, or what is deemed the welfare of this life, should cover us with shame, if we be not still more careful for the interests of an eternal life : And hence he represents the means and conditions of salvation by

figurative expressions taken from the good things of mortality; as liberty, life, treasure, meat, and drink. Thus the multitudes who crowded round him in hopes to be once more miraculously fed, were reminded that if they were so solicitous for bodily food, much more should they hunger and thirst for the good things of eternity. And when he came to intimate those benefits of his passion, which were hereafter to be more explicitly declared, "*My flesh,*" saith he, "*is meat indeed,*" "*and my blood is drink indeed:*" as if he had assured them, in plainer terms than he now judged fit to use, 'it is infinitely
' more profitable for you to be reconciled
' to God by my sufferings and death,
' and to embrace the terms of my covenant, than if I should feed you daily
' by a miracle, as I did yesterday.'

If then this momentous truth be lightly regarded, dismissed and forgotten,

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it is not the voice of a wretched creature that we despise; it is the voice of God himself, and the affectionate exhortations of our Lord and Saviour, in whose sight the salvation of every individual among us is precious. For the salvation of every individual among us he divested himself of that glory he enjoyed before all worlds, came down from heaven, took on him the form of a servant, submitted to the pains of life, became obedient to the miseries of death, rose from the grave, re-ascended into Heaven, sent his holy Spirit, poured out the riches of his Grace, formed his church, protecting, preserving, supporting it, and forbidding that the gates of hell ever should prevail against his merciful dispensations. This stupendous series of mercies, I say, was for us, for our deliverance from eternal wrath, for our restoration to life and immortality: and from us it is required, that we weigh seriously the words of
eternal

eternal life, that we adhere steadily to the hope of our calling, and that we act as becomes the redeemed of the Lord.

IN the retired or the religious hour, such considerations may not be entirely rejected. Then, we may even catch some spark of St. Peter's zeal, and acknowledge that the precepts of the Gospel are our only sure guide to present peace, and final happiness. But on our return to the world it is, that our steadiness and perseverance are brought to the decisive test. Are the temptations that surround us steadily repelled? Amidst all the hurry and agitation in which we are engaged, do we still retain a lively sense of the superiority of our eternal interests? Do we still adhere to them, and resolve to pursue them invariably, whatever be the allurements of present objects? Do they regulate our worldly pursuits, and say to our swelling passions, 'hitherto shall ye
' go,

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“go, and here shall your violence be
 “staid?” If so, we are indeed faithful fol-
 lowers of our Lord. But it is not a
 sudden and momentary compunction, a
 slight recollection, a faint attention to
 our great concern, that can redeem us
 from the slavery of worldly habits, re-
 store the careless or the obstinate deserter
 of his Lord, or at once reinstate him in
 the glorious privileges of a christian.

LET us hear then the conclusion of
 this whole matter. If what hath now
 been offered is received with disdain or
 indifference, there is nothing further to
 be urged. To the obstinate, and insen-
 sible, and obdurate, to the despiser of
 every affecting motive, and every power-
 ful invitation, there remaineth only a
 fearful looking for of judgment. But if
 your consciences are awakened, cherish
 the impression. If everlasting happiness,
 and never-ending misery be not of slight
 regard,

S E R M O N XXXII. 135

regard, chuse ye in what path ye will walk, and what master ye will obey. If duly convinced of the inestimable value, and possessed with a lively hope of glory and immortality, we know that our endeavours to obtain them cannot be delayed; no, not for a moment. We are instantly to "*lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,*" and to "*run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*" And may "*the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus,*" "*make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*" "*To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*"

A M E R I C A N W A R

Printed at the Request of the Parents and Friends of the

of Trinity College

of the Cadets of St. Augustin

for which it was also (for the next Year) collected.

... shall ye in what path ye will
... and what master ye will obey. If
... of the inestimable value
... and possessed with a lively hope of glory
... and immortality, we know that our en-
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... instantly to "lay aside every weight, and the
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... "fore us, looking unto Jesus the author and
... "finisher of our faith." And may "the
... "God of all grace, who hath called us unto
... "his eternal glory by Christ Jesus," "make
... "us perfect, blameless, and without fault, in
... "his glorious and dominion for ever
... "and ever. Amen."

S E R M O N XXXIII.

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN,

On FRIDAY the 13th of DECEMBER, 1776;

BEING THE

DAY APPOINTED BY AUTHORITY

FOR A

General FAST and HUMILIATION,

ON OCCASION OF THE

A M E R I C A N W A R.

*Published at the Request of the Provost and Senior Fellows
of Trinity College;*

And of the Parishioners of St. Anne's,

In which Church it was also (for the most Part) delivered.

S E R M O N XXXIII.

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

ON FRIDAY the 13th of DECEMBER, 1784

BEING THE

DAY APPOINTED BY AUTHORITY

FOR A

General FAST and HUMILIATION

ON OCCASION OF THE

AMERICAN WAR.

Printed at the Request of the Rectors and Senior Fellows
of Trinity College:
And of the Rectorians of St. Andrews
in which Church it was also (for the most Part) delivered.

TRINITY-COLLEGE, DUBLIN, Dec. 14th, 1776.

At a Meeting of the Provost and Senior Fellows,

Present,

The PROVOST,

DOCTOR CLEMENT,	DOCTOR KEARNEY,
DOCTOR LELAND,	DOCTOR DABZAC,
DOCTOR MURRAY,	DOCTOR FORESAYETH.
DOCTOR WILSON,	

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of this Board be given to DOCTOR LELAND, for his excellent Sermon preached Yesterday in the College-Chapel, and that he be requested to print the same.

RICHARD MURRAY, D. D. Register.

ST. ANNE'S Vestry, DUBLIN, Dec. 24th, 1776.

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of this Parish be given to the Reverend DOCTOR LELAND, for his excellent Sermon preached in the Church of St. ANNE's, on the 13th of this instant December, being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a general Fast and Humiliation, and that he be requested to print the same.

Signed by Order,

THOMAS GRAHAM.

Trinity College, Dublin, Dec. 24th, 1776.

At a Meeting of the Provost and Senior Fellows

Present,

The Provost,

Doctor Clement,
Doctor Ireland,
Doctor Daines,
Doctor Murray,
Doctor Forster,
Doctor Wilson,

Resolved, That the Thanks of this Board
be given to Doctor Ireland, for his excellent
Sermon preached Yesterday in the College-
Chapel, and that he be requested to print the
same.

RICHARD MURRAY, D. D. Registrar.

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St. Anne's Vestry, Dublin, Dec. 24th, 1776.

Resolved, That the Thanks of this Parish
be given to the Reverend Doctor Ireland, for
his excellent Sermon preached in the Church
of St. Anne's, on the 17th of this instant
December, being the Day appointed by Pro-
clamation for a General Fast and Humiliation,
and that he be requested to print the same.

Signed by Order,

THOMAS GRANTHAM

S E R M O N XXXIII.

*Preached, Dublin, December 13, 1776,
(being the Fast on Occasion of the Ame-
rican War) before the University of
Dublin, and (for the most part) at
St. Anne's church.*

JUDGES, chap. xxi. ver. 2 and 3.

*And the people came to the house of God, and
abode there till even before God, and lift
up their voices and wept sore ;*

*And said, O Lord God of Israel! why is
this come to pass in Israel, that there
should be this day, one tribe lacking in
Israel?*

THE spectacle here presented, is in-
teresting and affecting. On this day, we
may contemplate it with advantage, so
as to receive instruction, when instruction

seems

seems most necessary, from those things which "*happened for examples,*" and were written for "*our admonition.*"

A DESPERATE civil war commenced between Israel and one offending tribe, had been carried on with mutual slaughter and various success; and closed in the almost total excision of those men, who had defied the authority of their national government. The people, however provoked at the offenders, however elated by success, in the midst of victory, looked back on the haycock they had made, in grief and consternation. In the day of wrath, they had "*marched through the land, in indignation.*" Their weapons were red: but they soon reflected that it was in the blood of their countrymen and brethren. They were humbled, they were afflicted; they proclaimed a fast; they lay prostrate before the throne of mercy: with one voice, with one heart, they poured

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poured forth the effusions of a relenting spirit. Too violently agitated to debate the justice of their quarrel, too deeply pierced to discuss the occasion, to condemn the authors, agents, or fomenters of it, they gave free course to their remorse; they implored the divine assistance to close the publick breach, to heal those wounds their nation had now received, and to dispose the hearts of all, to peace and reconciliation.—Such was the conclusion of their civil strife.

I AM not solicitous to draw any parallel to this detail. I use it merely as an occasion to remind you, in general, of the present situation of our Israel; and to lead you to such reflections, as may promote the purpose of thus assembling before God in prayer and humiliation, that in his great mercy he may heal our wounds, and avert the evils with which we are threatened.

WE

WE are at this day, not indeed at the conclusion, possibly but at the commencement of a civil war. It hath already proved far more obstinate, far more afflicting and alarming, than at first our pride suffered us to suspect: and from this "*beginning of strife*" the most bitter waters have already gushed out. One tribe, however divided from us by situation, yet of our own language and people, influenced, I do not say, by what motives, hath avowed, and seems to glory in its separation. In a contest, however raised and inflamed, the appeal hath been made to heaven; and the decision seems, even yet, by no means so compleat, as to afford good ground for confidence and security. It is not the business of the present hour, to speculate on the causes and occasions of this contest. In the time of our visitation, we are to consider only, that we have been visited. There is an intestine war; the
empire

empire is rent; men's passions are enflamed; their sentiments various; their affections divided; the immediate state of things alarming; the future prospect melancholy; but one event desirable, a speedy and effectual reconciliation.

It is not for the christian to be dazzled by the splendour of a bloody victory; to exult in the miseries of unoffending thousands, crushed by an unnatural and grievous conflict. It is not for the christian to flatter men's passions, to echo their animosities, to "*Speak evil of dignities,*" or virulently of his fellow-subjects. When the sword is drawn, he looketh up to that power, by whom it is appointed for chastisement and terrour. His language is the pathetic language of the Prophet: "*O thou sword of the Lord, how long ere thou be quiet! Put thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.*" His heart's desire and prayer to God must be, that

he who ruleth the hearts of princes, who giveth counsellors wisdom, and restraineth the madness of the people, may arise and help us; aswage our animosities, avert our dangers, sheath the weapon of the destroyer, and make us all to know and see the real happiness of all, **RECONCILIATION and PEACE.**

Such, I trust, are the impressions already formed in your minds. And when with such impressions; we come to the house of God, and abide before him, it is natural, and alas, but too necessary to consider, how we may render ourselves less unworthy of the blessings we implore.

The principles of our holy religion are sometimes represented as detaching us from all civil connections, and teaching us to look down with indifference on the concerns and interests of earthly communities.

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nities. But the representation is injurious and false: for we *have not* so *learned Christ.* Both the precepts and examples of his gospel, tend to form the most valuable and amiable citizen, as well as the faithful subject of our Lord's universal kingdom. As citizens as well as christians, ye are now assembled; ye are now exhorted; ye are entreated to consider seriously, deeply, and earnestly, how our national dangers may be averted, and our national prosperity established and secured.

But can we, secluded from the busy and exalted scenes of life, can we contribute to the national prosperity? My brethren in all the events and vicissitudes of this world, we are by no means to confine our regards to what are called second causes. We are to elevate our hearts to the first Almighty agent: to consider the situations in which we may

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be found, as the appointments of his providence; as the voice of his wisdom, directing and admonishing his creatures; as the voice of his mercy, deterring, entreating; and recalling them to his service; and as the sentence of his justice, rewarding their faithfulness, or chastising their transgressions.

At a time, then, when he hath permitted a spirit of discord to harass and confound us, when the small cloud of calamity which at first appeared in our untroubled sky, no greater than a man's hand, is spreading, blackening, and threatening, when the tongue of every man is whetted against his neighbour, and the weapon of every warrior lifted against his brother; when we have *"miserable comforters"* to assure us, that the sinews of our strength are weakened, the sources of our prosperity failing, and new enemies impatient to arise and seize the advantage

advantage of our divisions; when these
 divisions are violent; when on one side
 we hear, "*the child behaveth himself fro-*
 "*wardly against the antient, and the base*
 "*against the honourable;*" when on the
 other we are told, "*O my people, they who*
 "*lead thee, cause thee to err.*" At such
 a time, if ever, and in such alarming dis-
 traction, surely we should ask our con-
 sciences, how have we merited these visi-
 tations? We should devoutly consider,
 that national calamity can be averted
 only by national reformation; and that
 if men would be reconciled to each other,
 they must first be reconciled to God.
 Every member of society is, therefore,
 bound to perform his part in this work
 of reformation; and to consider the faith-
 ful discharge of his particular duty, as
 of the utmost consequence to others, as
 well as to his own soul. In the day of
 battle every single soldier hath his re-
 spective duty; and by discharging it,

contributes

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contributes to the general security, however inconsiderable his single effort may appear. So in our spiritual warfare, Christ's faithful soldier and servant, in whatever station, with whatever powers, not only secures to himself a glorious crown, but contributes his part to establishing his Lord's kingdom, and subverting the dominion of Satan.

BUT what are the transgressions we are to forsake, as more especially unfriendly to national prosperity? Our own consciences inform us: our own hearts bear witness to our particular share of that universal corruption, which when detailed from this place, the odious description is too frequently regarded as the dictates of bigotry, or the morose language of a profession.

Look up to the great and exalted of these nations. Are they worshippers of God?

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God? Do they reverence his law? Are they influenced by the pure, disinterested, peaceful, and benevolent principles of the Gospel?—We judge no man. There is one who judgeth: who knoweth and seeth how far the example of a PIOUS PRINCE hath influenced all those in authority under him; and how far the general profligacy must have extended, which hath taught the froward and the factious to deal this epithet to their prince in scorn.

Ye who have been conversant in any of the more elevated spheres of life, say, hath it not become fashionable to pour contempt upon the national religion? To speak of God's everlasting word, as the word of error, fraud, and superstition? To deride every principle but that of private interest, and self-gratification? To confine the thoughts, desires, and hopes, to the sordid circle of this world?

To

To listen to the wretched babbler who calls this wisdom; and to applaud the voice of ignorance, when it whispers this miserable consolation to the vicious,—
 ‘Ye are to lie down with the beasts that perish!’

Ask those who have observed the prevailing manners of these nations, even down to the lower and vulgar orders. They will tell you of that dissipated and voluptuous abuse of time and fortune, insolently called the Art of Living; of the inordinate cravings of vanity and sensuality, which fill the mouths of the restless with the brawlings of faction, or attach the ignorant and servile blindly to a party; the perversion of every moral principle; the defiance of every decency in private life; the practice of fashionable fraud stiled elegant amusement; the indulgence of revenge and pride that assumes the name of honour; the disregard
 of

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of religious ordinances, even among those who do not openly renounce their faith; the wanton contempt of God's ministers and their labours; the carelessness and inattention even of the least depraved; their indifference and insensibility to their immortal interests; their imitation of those vanities which disgrace their superiors; their feverish thirst of dangerous and contemptible pleasures, their frivolous pursuits, their futile competitions, their childish engagements.

AND of the manners of the vulgar, alas, we are daily witnesses; of brutal cruelties unknown even among our corrupted neighbours; rapine and violence, and defiance of every ordinance human and divine; sloth, and fraud, and beastly indulgences; and that hardened insensibility, which treats a solemn appeal to the searcher of hearts, with hideous levity; and breaks the bonds of society,
by

by trampling on its great security, the obligation of a sacred oath. God grant the tremendous enormity may not have spread beyond the vulgar! And God grant, that it prove not a peculiar reproach to this very land!

AND alas, this land, a land which Providence hath rescued from barbarism, from poverty, from miseries of various kinds; where even we of this generation can trace the rapid progress of civility and prosperity, should of all others, (for its situation is distinguishable from that of all others) labour to be without reproach. Yet we might enumerate the excesses, follies, and corruptions peculiarly our own. We might display that pride and infatuated presumption which have so often fought against our interests as a nation; the divisions and factions we have maintained, under the false pre-

tence

tence of publick spirit ; which have really extinguished all publick spirit.

—But it is grievous to dwell on such objects.—Yet, let me mention one vice, spread, countenanced, and favoured, in these nations. I mean the passion for censure and reviling, and the tremendous abuse of liberty, for an occasion to revenge and malice, insolence and pride, or perhaps some clandestine purpose of self-interest. The period is in the memory of many among us, when this fury burst from its usual concealments, and raised the head with undisguised impudence. We know that its virulence hath been shed on every character, even the most exalted. In the elevated scenes of life, in the discussion of publick conduct and publick characters, we are told that such offences must come. But we know that in inferiour districts and communities, the odious and contemptible have awkwardly

wardly imitated this licence; and that scarcely in any retirement, can the most unoffending be assured of enjoying the peace of private life, or the honest discharge of his social duties, when there are vehicles to convey to publick view, the wantonness or malice of any one man who wishes to disturb his peace. I ask not why the vigour of government hath not been exerted to crush these serpents. I enquire not into the propriety of those maxims or modes of policy, by which they have been suffered to exhaust their own venom: till the indiscriminate rage of censure hath, at length, deprived it of its sting; and the innocent and guilty alike are taught to despise the impotence of its hissings.

With these and many other marks of national corruption, is it for us, to rely confidently on the arm of flesh? Is it for us, to look up to the God of Hosts, whom

whom we have defied and forsaken? We contend, you say, with the disloyal and rebellious. But the disloyal and rebellious may be made dreadful instruments of God's wrath. But we have been hitherto victorious. Wretched is the triumph, which should end at last in the remorse of the united tribes of Israel, when, prostrating themselves before God, they "*lift up their voices and wept sore.*" And is it a small thing that we contend with those who are said to be sober and devout, and with their weapons in their hands, to have "*the praises of the Lord in their mouths?*" These, you say, are hypocritical appearances. Then will God who trieth our thoughts, condemn the hypocrites. But woe to the sinful creature who judgeth of the sincerity of others, by his own heart! and woe to the wretched politician, who considereth not the alarming influence even of a form of godliness!

If

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If then we hope that God will yet be gracious, and grant us the inestimable blessing of peace, let us instantly divest ourselves of every vain notion of our consequence, of our might, of the weakness and perverseness of our gainstayers, or of the justice of our cause. Let the children of this world trust in such imaginations: but let us lay a sure foundation for our hope, by returning to him, from whom we have *“deeply revolted.”* For whatever he may decree for us as a collective body, thus only can every individual among us *“flee from the wrath to come.”* Let us, in the first place, learn to *“fear God,”* and labour to revive the energy of religion in our own own breasts, to cherish and diffuse its vital spirit. It is the *“fear of great peace,”* which not only far outweighs every other principle, moral or social, but contains in it all that is valuable and praise-worthy in a man or a citizen.

Let

Let it once possess the mind, and become the ruling principle of conduct, and we shall need no exhortations to justice, equity, and charity, to peace, benevolence, and candour. It will harmonize our disorders, and render all our actions, counsels, and devices, gracious and comfortable to those around us. It will teach us, (if there be need of such instruction) to "*honour the king,*" to pray earnestly that the wisdom from above may guide him, and the shield of the Almighty protect him from the "*secret council of the wicked, and the insurrection of the workers of iniquity,*" wheresoever they may be found. It will dispose us to submit cheerfully and reverently to his constitutional authority, and to whomsoever it may be delegated: not tossed about by every wind of clamour or discontent; but "*adhering steadily to that system of supreme power, which Providence hath established among us, as our*" *say and* *plea* *our*

"our staff," and to rest gladly on the
 sure basis of our freedom and our hap-
 piness. For we must not be inattentive
 to the precept of the wise man: "*Meddle
 not with them that are given to change.*"
 Beware of every busy agent of faction
 and innovation, of those, who speak evil
 not only of our rulers, but of our go-
 vernment; who spurn at subordination,
 and call obedience slavery; of those, who
 have imbibed their portion of that re-
 publican spirit which is said to have
 arisen among us; for it is a spirit utterly
 unfriendly to that very liberty, whose
 cause it affects to espouse.
 These things, perhaps, should be dis-
 played with more extent, and urged with
 greater force. But I stand before men
 who are of the number of those "*Scribes
 instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,*"
 that from their own treasures can bring
 forth things fitted for edification. They
 need

need not be reminded, that *HERE*, every the least trace of corruption must appear doubly odious, and every degree of depravity load us with tenfold guilt: but that every good word and work should issue from this place, as its proper centre, to illuminate, to comfort, to adorn and to improve the land.

As to those of fewer years and less experience, they, I trust, will receive the word of exhortation gladly. They cannot be insensible to those events which affect the publick welfare. They can already judge of their influence and consequence. They have already learned what it is that "*exalteth a nation*;" and what is "*the reproach*," and the destruction of "*any people*." And at their time of life, if ever, publick spirit, and a love of their country, are principles fervent in ingenuous minds. On this day, we address ourselves to these principles; we are

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pleading for our brethren and fellow-citizens, for that empire in whose bosom we are protected, for every member in its extended circuit; for parents, kinsmen, friends, the rising age, and every future generation. In the name of every tender charity, of every endearing connection, we entreat you, to approve yourselves real lovers of your country: to habituate yourselves, even in this place, to rational obedience and submission; to consider seriously what course of conduct befits your nurture; to labour meekly and diligently for that knowledge, which may enable you to discern the true interests of society, and for those virtuous principles, which may make you zealous in the prosecution of them. So, by your instructions and admonitions, by your influence and examples, ye shall hereafter prove happy instruments in the hands of providence, of directing, persuading, restraining, and reforming those around

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around you. And so shall ye do your part faithfully to turn aside the wrath of the Almighty, from yourselves and from your country.

AND would to God! that every offending creature would suffer the terrors of the Lord to sink deep into his heart! that on this day, the great and the exalted, the lowly and obscure, the proud, and sensual, and selfish, and insensible, the presumptuous scorner, the affecter of speculation and darkener of *"counsel by words without knowledge,"* the heedless, the debased and brutal, were all alike, seriously and feelingly humbled before God, and awakened to a sense of those glorious and momentous purposes, for which we were created and redeemed!

Thus only may we hope that God will say to our present adversaries,—

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~~We have not hearkened unto me in pro-~~
~~claiming liberty, every one to his brother,~~
~~and every man to his neighbour."~~ No!
 nor is there any other reasonable ground
 of assurance, that the measure of our
 iniquities is not at this hour full; that
 the operations of God's avenging provi-
 dence are not already evident; and that
 he hath not chosen another people, and
 another land, to plant his name and
 worship there.
 Is then ye would not "*fear their fear*"
 who have arisen, or may arise against
 us; hearken to the voice of the Prophet.
 "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and
 let Him be your fear, and Him be
 your dread."—Or if with hearts of bre-
 thren we lament the loss of one tribe,
 it is the ardour of our repentance, the
 sincerity of our amendment, and the
 mercy of the Almighty, which can bind
 us up

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up our wounds and restore us once again
to UNION, AMITY and PEACE.

S E R M O N XXXIV.

GRANT this thou God of Mercy, who
hath spared us in the midst of our of-
fences! Let thy gracious spirit descend
into our hearts in this the hour of our
humiliation; that the sacrifice of these
nations may be acceptable in thy sight;
and that we may be effectually moved
to an humble acknowledgment of thy
goodness, our sole reliance, and to the
habitual practice of holiness and righte-
ousness, our true happiness, through
Christ our Lord!

I N the solemn hour of humiliation,
when through the whole extent of these
realms, we are all with one voice to
implore the divine mercy, our reflections.

up our wounds and sorrow as once again
to know what and where
I want this God of Mercy, who
hath spared us in the midst of our of-
fence! Let thy gracious spirit descend
into our hearts in this the hour of our
distress, that the sacrifice of these
sins may be acceptable in thy sight,
and that we may be effectually moved
to an humble acknowledgment of thy
goodness, our sole reliance, and to the
habitual practice of holiness and righte-
ousness, our true happiness through
Christ our Lord, and our eternal joy.
Amen.

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S E R M O N XXXIV.

Preached in the church of St. Anne's, Dublin, on Wednesday the 10th of February, 1779; being the day appointed for a general fast on occasion of the American war. Published at the request of the parishioners in vestry assembled.

EZEKIEL, chap. xxviii. ver. 17.

Thine heart was lifted up, because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom, by reason of thy brightness. I will cast thee to the ground; I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

IN the solemn hour of humiliation, when through the whole extent of these realms, we are all with one voice to implore the divine mercy, our reflections, if

if ever, should be serious and devout. We are too well instructed to imagine that a formal compliance with authority, an exterior of contrition, however decently composed, or any slight impression of our unworthiness, or any transient and ineffectual sorrow for our offences, can be accepted by him who "*trieth the reins and the heart.*" If our present devotions are no more than these, let us proceed no further in the abominable sacrifice, for "*it is not such a fast that God hath chosen.*" In the service of this day, we have heard it disclaimed in the utmost force and fulness of expression.

BUT whether we are to be awakened to devout attention, or whether the impression of our present duty needs only to be assisted and enlivened, I know no object worthier our present attention, than some affecting instance of God's dealing

dealing with the children of men, and of the ways of his adorable providence, in confounding the presumption, and punishing the perverseness of a sinful people. Such is the tremendous object presented in the text. Let it be attentively considered: and the instruction to be derived from it will be found obvious and important.

HISTORY bears its evidence to the greatness of this people, on whom ye have heard the sentence of destruction pronounced with such solemnity. And it is described by the Prophets in terms of the utmost magnificence.—TYRE,
*“ the crowning city, whose merchants are
 “ princes, and whose traffickers the honour-
 “ able of the earth:—who “ heaped up
 “ silver as the dust, and fine gold as the
 “ mire.”——“ Strong in the sea, she and
 “ her inhabitants, which caused their terror
 “ to be on all that haunt it.”——“ Mer-
 chant*

"chant of the people for many isles,"—
whose "builders had perfected her beauty;"
—into whose bosom distant nations
poured their vast confluence of wealth.—
The East supplied her luxurious indul-
gences; and from the West was she
"replenished and made glorious."—"Every
"precious stone was her covering."—Her
"song" and her "harp," and every in-
strument of delight, and every splendid
and every exquisite gratification was
"prepared in her." Her abundance, yet
unexhausted, "filled many people; and
"kings were enriched with the multitude of
"her riches."

AND this wealth and splendour were naturally attended by arts and refinement, speculation and knowledge. From early days was Tyre distinguished by philosophical researches; and from her torch, the neighbouring people caught, and diffused the flame of science. Commercial

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mercial knowledge was her strength; and political wisdom her peculiar boast.—

“Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom

“and perfect in beauty,” saith the Lord.

She modelled her political constitution, she improved, she compleated it, fixed her seal of approbation on the all-accomplished frame; and pronounced it perfect in excellence, beautiful in arrangement, and wisely and wonderfully adapted to the protection of her people. So that, agreeably to these notions of her own consequence, the Prophet compares her to an object of the utmost reverence and magnificence, one of the Cherubim placed in the sanctuary, in the midst of gold and glowing gems, spreading abroad the majestic covering of its wings.

But mark the intoxicating influence of this splendour and prosperity. The *“heart”* of this people was *“lifted up,”* *“because of”* their *“beauty,”* their fair
and

and flourishing condition; and this even to an hideous degree of pride and self-sufficient confidence. "*Thou hast said,*" (such is the word of the Lord to her prince, the representative of the whole state,) "*I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas.*"—I am the mighty one, and there is none to dispute my dominion, or to controul my power. My arm hath wrought it, and my wisdom hath established it.

AND iniquity and oppression were the offspring of this pride. "*By the multitude of thy merchandize,*" saith the prophet, "*they have filled the midst of thee with violence:*"—and "*thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries;*" the seats of thy glory and authority, "*by the multitude of thine iniquities.*"—Thou "*wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created.*" The original character of this people was marked with virtue and integrity.

tegrity. But these honourable distinctions were effaced by rapacious avarice, by frivolous vanity, by sensual pleasure, by the long train of depraved affections attendant on enormous wealth.

AND with the depravity of their hearts, the wisdom of this people, that wisdom which they boasted, became depraved and corrupt. Their philosophy flattered the pride and self-sufficiency of man; or taught him to deny the superintendence of the HIGH and HOLY ONE; to ascribe all this harmonious order, and majestic frame of things to chance; depriving virtue of its most animating motives, and disarming those terrors which ever should attend on vice. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that her political wisdom also, must have been vitiated by the pride of prosperity. The splendid and elevated, whether in publick or private life, communities or individuals, are tempted to forget

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forget that equality in which God hath formed all his creatures, and hence to reason on the rights of others and their own, with partiality and predilection to themselves; to regard the present blessings of providence, as their own peculiar and exclusive privilege; and to deny to others what they themselves acknowledge to be essential to man's happiness. And their pride thus dictating to their reason, naturally rendered them what the Prophet calls "*the pricking brier, and the grieving thorn, of all that were round about them.*"

BUT whatever were the effects of their insolence and blindness, in general we know that they must have been abominable, from the sentence denounced against this offending people.—"*I will make thee a desolate city.—Thou shalt be built no more.*"—"Thou shalt never be found again," but "*become a barren rock,*"

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"rock," and "a place to spread nets upon."—And the traveller of present times beholds the dreadfully exact and literal accomplishment of this sentence. A few miserable habitations of those who spread their nets, have at this day usurped the seat of splendour and magnificence, the glory and the terrour of the antient world.

AGAIN,—the destruction of this people was for tremendous example.—

"I will cast thee to the ground; I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee:"—that the great ones of the earth, beholding the fall of the exalted, might stand in awe, and listen to the admonition of this affecting spectacle; be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the proud and the oppressor, take heed that he also spare not thee.

For

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FOR this purpose it is, (as we are repeatedly assured) that the providence of the Almighty ordereth the affairs of nations; that his arm is stretched out to "*purge away their dross,*" that "*the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up;*" that he may remove the veil, and dispel the cloud which hides the divinity from the eyes of the earthly-minded, in the usual course of their pursuits; that by his visitations he may strike terror to the heart of the inattentive and secure, check the dangerous career of insolence and oppression, and make the exalted feel that "*the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.*"

WERE the instances of such superintendence found only in the Jewish nation, we might be told that this people were governed by extraordinary interpositions,

sitions, from which we can deduce no consequences with respect to other societies. And yet we find the most fearful denunciations against this people, closed with a general sentence on every offending people under heaven. "*Where-soever the carcase is,*" saith our Lord,—in whatever place or nation the Jewish corruptions may prevail, and the objects of God's wrath be found,—"*thither will the eagles be gathered together*"—there will be found the ministers of God's justice and of his "*fury poured out,*" as surely as the bird of prey darts on its appointed quarry.—And when we see this awful declaration confirmed in God's word, by various instances of his righteous judgments, extending over various societies, planting and plucking up, according to the secret order of his providence; what are we to conclude, or what instruction should we deduce from the things written for our instruction,

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but that momentous truth, at this day to be received with fear and reverence, that in these latter times "*his hand is not shortened;*" but that in his justice as well as in his mercy, he is "*the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever?*"

OR if there be creatures so infatuated, that they will not discover the great ruling agent in the course of worldly events, it is now no time to encounter their perverseness. We know that nature, and the causes and effects of nature, are no other than the works of the Lord, appointed and directed to the purposes of his wise and gracious providence. We know and are assured that the winds are his messengers, the fire his minister; that he saith to the "*sword go through the land,*" that he "*killeth and maketh alive,*" that he "*bringeth down them that dwell on high, giveth power to the faint, and encreaseth strength*"

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"to them that have no might;" that
 "the hearts of kings" are in his hand,
 and "the madness of the people" under his
 direction and controul.

Thus persuaded, and thus instructed
 by the declarations and examples of
 God's wrath on the offending, can we
 of these nations hesitate a moment to
 acknowledge, that at this day the judg-
 ments of the Almighty "are in the
 earth?" Do we believe his word, and
 can we deem this the language of su-
 perstition? Can we be contented to con-
 fine our regards to the wretched objects
 that immediately surround us? to en-
 quire, to speculate, to reason upon pub-
 lick events? to trace them to these
 sources, to these devices, to these coun-
 sels? to arraign or to defend the sup-
 posed authors or occasions of our dis-
 tress? Alas! we have heard too much of
 invective, accusation, and contest.

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"*long, O Lord, holy and true!*"—shall internal dissention rage for ever, and our own infatuations fill up the measure of thy wrath?—We, my brethren, are, for the most part, happily removed from the storms of public contention. The leaders and exalted agents in our national transactions, may be distracted and agitated and enflamed. But we have leisure; and are, I trust, disposed to hearken to "*the rod and him that hath appointed it,*" with a composed and devout attention. And manifest are the marks of his displeasure; and powerful the voice of his admonition.

His wonders of old time should be recorded in our hearts; and his blessings to these nations held in everlasting remembrance. He rescued, he defended, he directed us, he granted us the blessings of a free and equal government, and the inestimable enjoyment of pure religion;

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he drove back our enemies, he enlarged our borders. Britain was the joy of the whole earth. People the most distant bowed before her: nations the most opulent did her service. She was "*replenished and made glorious.*" But thou, O Lord, hast again hidden thy face, and we are troubled! The arm of the child is lifted against the parent, and they of our own kindred and language have turned their eyes from "*the rock whence*" they "*are hewn.*" War and clamour and animosity are our portion: in our councils division, in our streets complaint, in our houses mourning; hunger and nakedness, (here more especially in our own afflicted borders) clamouring for relief, poverty and calamity uttering their piercing cries; hideous impatience for rapine and bloodshed; the cruelty of despair, the blind rage of envy, the melancholy necessity of public justice, the outrageous defiance of its utmost severity;

city; the perpetual dread of violence, and life of terour and suspicion and anxious precaution, as if we had no civil union, no laws for our protection; as if this country were driven back by her distresses to the barbarity of antient times; and the impatience of her children were ready to renew the days of outrage and desolation.

BUT not to dwell on the peculiar visitations of our own unhappy land, let us extend our views, as our affections should be extended, to our fellow-subjects.—We know, and it is not the voice of faction which now calls us to acknowledge, with what confidence in the arm of flesh, we scoffed at the first appearance of hostility in the revolting Colonies. Too nearly resembling the great city described by the Prophet, we seemed to “*set our hearts as the heart of God.*” Who could resist our might,
or

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or who could question our jurisdiction? The spirits of the rebellious were to melt as wax, and the presumption of the gainfayers, at our approach, was to die within them. We called them weak; we felt them powerful: we talked of subduing; we found resistance and defiance. In our pride we dictated submission; with equal and perhaps no less dangerous pride, they renounced all connexion. Here, our mighty men could boast but of some imperfect advantages; there, our menaces were confounded, and our vaunting turned to disgrace. We looked for success, and behold, a snare; for victory, and the mercy of our adversaries was our refuge. Another enemy watched the moment of our distress, devised how we might be brought low, prepared, avowed her hostilities, issued to the contest, shrunk from our assault, and boasted of victory. While our foes exulted, we were troubled: our
 painful

painful anxiety could not be concealed. And if our native coasts have not been invaded, we have dreadful and devouring enemies in the midst of us; dissension, and clamour, and jealousy, and mutual accusation; corruption and profligacy beyond the example of former days, obstinacy and indifference, and unrelenting defiance of God's righteous judgments.—Such are “*the signs of the times.*”

BUT when we speak of national corruption, shall we not be told with triumphant scorn, that this is the formal language of our place and profession, the endless repetition of an exhausted topic, easy to be resumed, but disgusting to the judicious and refined?—Corrupted is the judgment, and contemptible the refinement that reject the voice of truth and freedom. In this place, and on this occasion, shall the minister of God's
word

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word fear to offend the fastidious and affected? to provoke the pride not yet subdued, or to encounter the scorner who "*heareth not rebuke?*" Shall he who is to bear testimony against every transgression, speak "*smooth things,*" to the dissolute excesses of our lower orders, to the indifference and insensibility of their immediate superiours, to the prevailing defiance of every religious motive, and contempt of every sacred truth, the scorn of every moral principle, and the licentiousness so headstrong, and so shamefully undisguised, which have rendered the exalted of our people vile in the sight of God and man?

BUT the strongest descriptions of our danger, and the severest representations of our guilt, that at this hour are heard in any of our religious assemblies, cannot mean to insult our distress, or to denounce the fulness of God's inevitable wrath

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wrath against us. There is no authority to cry out in the inspired language, "*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*" And in vain is the word of exhortation sounded in our ears, if there be no hope, no expectation, but a fearful looking for of judgment, temporal and eternal. No, my brethren! The power that raised, can allay our storms, the goodness that delivered, may again restore us, and the long suffering that hath spared, may still lead us to repentance. Impiety and iniquity have been our chastisement, but enormous as they may be, God forbid that they should become our destruction! As individuals, the things which belong to our peace are not yet hidden from our eyes. As a people, we trust, (and O that this trust were fixed on the firmest basis!) that God hath not yet utterly taken away from us, "*the stay and the staff, the mighty man, and the*

*“man of war, the prudent, the counsellor,
“and the eloquent orator.”*

LET us even indulge the hope, that disappointment and distress have been our instructors; and that at this day, some promising indications of a moderate and equitable temper may be found among us. We seem to feel and confess that the issues of war are precarious. The first sudden rage of indignation and disdain hath subsided; and the devices of our counsellors have been to restore and conciliate, and to re-establish peace on terms of concession and compliance. We have seen the first dawnings of a disposition *“to undo the heavy burdens,
“and to let the oppressed go free.”* The burden of this our country, which hath sustained its burden without repining, and scarcely with complaint, hath been viewed, not without a kind regard. It seems to be acknowledged, that equity
and

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and policy call loudly, to enervate this part of the empire, whose vigour hath been miserably exhausted, by the present quarrel; and by a reasonable and necessary extension of our commerce, to reward our attachment, and enable us to indulge our affection to the parent-state, by an effectual assistance in time of need. And blessed be the advocates for so generous a policy, and blessed be those who are so wise and so just as to support it!

BUT whatever may be hoped from those in station and authority; should their influence and example be directed to diffuse a general spirit of equity and moderation, of humbleness and singleness of heart; should they determine wisely, and labour zealously, to stem the torrent of corruption, and to support the cause of God; still, let it be duly weighed, that national reformation, and all its attendant

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attendant blessings, are derived only from the united efforts of every individual. Nor is there an individual among us of whatever order or condition, who is not bound to lay this seriously to heart. Publick distresses are the warnings of an all-gracious parent, not to nations only, but to each particular; recalling him from the error of his ways, that in the great day of retribution he may be able to stand before the Son of Man. He then who contemplates the dispensations of the Lord, and his wonders of old time, who considers the present tokens of his displeasure, and professes to humble himself before that Majesty he hath offended, must approve the sincerity of this humiliation, unless he obstinately embraces the portion of the hypocrite. Let him "*turn to him that smiteth;*" and he shall find the bitter waters of calamity at once made sweet and salutary.

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WE now prepare to offer up our supplications to the throne of grace, that God would ‘ take from us all hardness of heart, all neglect of his ordinances, and contempt of his word; and endue us with a spirit of piety and devotion, a spirit of justice and temperance, of humility and charity, and of all other graces which adorn the christian profession.’——If this be not the petition of a deeply contrite heart, how should the mocker of the Almighty tremble at his abominable presumption! He cannot say, ‘ I was not duly attentive, I did not consider the full weight and consequence of this petition:’ for he is now warned of its solemn import, and the disposition with which it should be uttered. Let not then even our “*prayer become sin.*” That “*accursed thing*” which is harboured in the breast of every one among us, must be put away. Let it lie no longer rankling to our destruction;

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struction; let it be expelled and excluded.

THEY who hear me this day, I trust, have not imbibed the full infection of our national vices. God forbid we had here to encounter the hardened defiance and profligate contempt of every moral and religious principle! Many among us are distinguished rather by inattention and indifference, than by a deliberate rejection of God's law. But their inattention must be obstinate indeed, and their indifference horridly obdurate, if they resist the forcible denunciations of God's wrath, as well as the affecting invitations of his mercy. Self-enjoyment, and dissipation, and pleasure, principally criminal in its circumstances and excess, may have hitherto seduced us. In the day of prosperity it might be deemed an over-righteous rigour, to inveigh against the curious adornments of the person, the

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studied elegance of our dwellings, and splendour of our societies. But such pursuits are more hideous than frivolous, when the storm of general calamity cannot suspend them; when it is loud and dreadful amidst all the uproar of vice and folly; when it no longer threatens at a distance, but hath burst with its full fury upon our own heads; when in every part of our own afflicted country, ten thousands and twenty thousands, howl for the calamities of war, in hunger and nakedness; when this City, the seat of what We call opulence, sitteth "*as a widow*" suffering the daily "*loss of children*;" and tortured with the cries of those who have not yet sunk under the oppression of poverty and despair.

Is this a time for self-enjoyment, for gaiety and pleasure? for careless indifference and wanton security? Within, and without us, and on every side are

our instructors. They recal us to serious and solemn attention, with a voice loud and forcible, like "*the noise of many waters.*" If our hearts be not as the rock, and every social and religious affection utterly extinguished within us, let us not resist the awful admonition. Let us "*break off*" our "*sins by righteousness, and*" our "*iniquities, by shewing mercy to the poor.*" Far from striving with our maker, let our striving be for his gracious benediction. So shall everlasting joy be our inheritance, and our portion in this life, peace.

AND for our "*brethren and companions' sake,*" for the sake of those endeared to us by every bond of affection; "*be-*" "*cause of the house of the Lord,*" and the free enjoyment of that holy light of religion not yet extinguished in our land, let us seek the good, and pray for the peace of our Jerusalem. For hereunto
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are we called, by our christian profession. And that gracious Being who is slow to anger, will hear the prayer of those who truly turn to him. He will answer, "*Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God.*" "*Every one shall help his neighbour, and every man say to his brother be of good courage.*" We shall have "*counsel and strength for war.*" And when the unnatural alliance formed against us shall prove the reed of Egypt, and wound the hand that grasped it, "*the envy of Ephraim*" (let us not resign the hope) shall, "*even yet, depart, and the adversaries of Judah be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.*" The separated shall unite, and the discordant become reconciled: the enemies of peace shall be confounded, the pride of the gainsayer brought low, and brethren dwell in unity together. And in the mouths of

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all his faints, God shall put a song of thanksgiving.—“ O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me.”

IF creatures polluted and corrupted as we are, can presume to lift our eyes to thy mercy-seat,—Grant this inestimable blessing, thou God of mercy! To our earthly sovereign, and to all who stand near his throne, to all of station and authority, to all entrusted with the public interests, grant a full portion of thy assisting spirit, that “ *spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and fear of the Lord!*”—And to all thy people grant that ‘ the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness,’—even to that day, when strife and war shall

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cease,

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cease, when God shall wipe away all
tears, and sorrow and crying and pain
shall be no more, and death be swallow-
ed up in victory, through Christ Jesus our
Lord!

as we are, can presume to lift our eyes
to the mercy-seat. — Grant this insti-
table blessing, thou God of mercy! To
our earthly sovereign, and to all who
stand near his throne, to all of station
and authority, to all entrusted with the
public interests, grant a full portion of
thy blessing spirit, that "spirit of wis-
dom and understanding, of counsel and
fear of the Lord." — And to all the people grant
that the course of this world may be so
peaceably ordered by thy governance,
that thy church may joyfully serve
at thee in all godly quietness, — even to
that day, when strife and war shall
cease.

and welfare of society are most essential.

SERMON XXXV.

The Love of our Country.
Gospel. They have been confused; but
Preached at St. ANNE'S, DUBLIN,
June 23, 1782.

Religion is utterly necessary to the interests of every worldly society; as if we had to learn Christ, as to stand detached from my Brethren and Companions sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee.

Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.

THIS Psalm is said to have been sung by the Tribes, as they went up in solemn procession to the Temple of Jerusalem. It expresses a lively sense of the blessings derived from their social union; and (in the text particularly) a generous and national

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onal affection for the welfare of their country.

We are told by the enemies of our holy Faith, that such affection, if not discouraged, is at least not inculcated by the Gospel. They have been confuted; but the charge hath been repeated. It hath even been asserted, that the genius of our Religion is utterly unfriendly to the interests of every worldly society; as if we had so learned Christ, as to stand detached from all those concerns and connexions, in which we are expressly bound to approve ourselves to God; and as if the law of universal love, were a law of useless, unfeeling, and unnatural indifference to all mankind.

TAKE it is, that the Gospel precepts are generally addressed to individuals, and tend generally to regulate the temper and conduct of individuals. But they sup-

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pose them already members of civil society : they are precepts by which the peace and welfare of society are most effectually promoted : they earnestly and repeatedly inculcate the duties arising from our several social relations. The solicitude of our blessed Lord, for his country, and his brethren according to the flesh, we find breaking forth in the tenderest effusions of affection and compassion. And such was the patriotic zeal (as we may call it) of St. Paul, that his very force and ardour of expression have given occasion to misinterpret and mistake him.

THERE is indeed a love of our country, falsely so called, which every Christian must disclaim, as utterly repugnant to the spirit of the Gospel. When it lends a fair disguise to insatiable and merciless ambition ; when it drives men headlong into the ways of iniquity and cruelty ; despoils, oppresses, harrasses ; and pursues what is called

called national glory through torrents of innocent blood: in these and many like cases, in every case indeed, where a partial affection for our native land becomes inconsistent with the justice and benevolence due to mankind, it is no longer that Christian affection due to our people and our nation, but a sinful conspiracy against the rights and happiness of others.

BUT to distinguish the true love of our country from the spurious pretences of pride, avarice and ambition, we need but attend to the expressions of the text. They teach us not only the ground and foundation of this amiable virtue, but the proper fruits by which it should be manifested. Such is the subject on which I now purpose to enlarge. At this time, and in this country, it is a subject seasonable and proper to be reviewed.

In the first place then, we are to hold our country dear, "*for our brethren and companions' sake.*" By our social union it is, that we are enabled to form all those dear ties and connexions which constitute the happiness we now enjoy. Parents, children, brethren, friends, associates, fellow-citizens, are all enabled to live and act together, in affection and unity, in peace, and mutual confidence, and general security. Their inheritances and acquisitions, the fruits of their industry, the reward of their labours, are quietly enjoyed, and freely applied to every purpose of benevolence and duty. They fear no savage violence; they recur to no savage violence for defence or for redress. For in their country, (as the Psalmist speaks) "*is the seat of judgment;*" the whole some administration of those laws, which Providence hath appointed for their relief. Thus are they enabled to provide
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nurture for their little ones, protection for their help-mates ; to cultivate every honest art, and every liberal refinement of a civil state, to extend their amicable intercourse, and to enjoy all the advantages arising from a mutual exchange of good and friendly offices.

SUCH observations are not addressed to the sordid and selfish member of society. In vain do we tell him of the blessings enjoyed by his brethren and companions ; or of the grateful returns due to that society, by which these blessings are secured. He hath no brethren or companions ; no affections strong enough to pierce beyond the narrow limits of his own interest. In some situations he may find it convenient to dissemble. He may insidiously assume the appearance of public spirit. He may bawl loudly, and contend violently for what he calls the publick interest. In his fair and plausible disguise, he may
wind

wind his way patiently through the crooked paths of craft and dissimulation. But let him ask his own conscience, and it will assure him, that the end of all his labour is the gratification of his own rapacity, or pride, or whatever passion is predominant in his contracted mind. It is the honest, the ingenuous and liberal spirit which is susceptible of true public affection. It is he whose heart is full fraught with Christian charity, that charity which extends to all around him, who knows and feels the value of those social advantages enjoyed by all around him.

And here it is to be observed, that the reverence and affection for our community must be encreased and enlivened, in proportion to the wisdom and goodness of its institutions, and the provisions made for more effectually answering the purposes of our civil union.

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WHERE men are subject to the most arbitrary dominion, still the habitual recollection of those scenes, in which, from their early years, they have found pleasure and enjoyment, may give them an instinctive love of their native land. Where civil government is tolerable, where it secures many essential advantages, though not all, that a free and liberal constitution can bestow, the affection for our society becomes a rational principle founded on a grateful sense of real benefits received, and the hopes of extending and improving them. But when in any state, God hath suddenly wrought a wonderful thing; when He in whose hand are the hearts both of Prince and People, hath turned them to the purposes of his gracious mercy; when, as at this time, and in this land, the rights of a people have been illustriously asserted, generously acknowledged, liberally restored; when God hath not taken away

WHERE from

from our Jerusalem, "*the mighty man,*
" the honourable, the counsellor, and the
" eloquent orator," but hath called forth
 their zeal and abilities, to be the instru-
 ments of his providential goodness, to
 establish the work of our hands, and to
 transmit the blessing of our days, even to
 the latest generation of our children's
 children;—then must the heart be
 hideously insensible, that doth not expand,
 and overflow with public affection, that
 doth not in the full triumph of benevo-
 lence, embrace and congratulate his
 brethren and companions, rejoice in their
 joy, and delight in their prosperity.

AND, blessed be God! we have mani-
 fested on this glorious occasion, that our
 patriotic affection is not confined to one
 district, or the precincts of one island.
 The whole extent of a mighty empire is
 our country; and the members of its re-
 mote borders, our brethren and fellow-
 citizens;

citizens; with one civil constitution, and one interest, and one gracious Sovereign, and, I trust, with one heart of loyalty and grateful reverence to the common father of an united people.

BUT to return to the general doctrine of the text. The affection due to our community, is not merely for the temporal advantages derived from our social union, but, "*because of the House of the Lord our God;*" because we have the opportunity, in civil life, of being nurtured in the knowledge and fear of the Most High; of uniting with our christian brethren in every solemn act of adoration of the great Lord of heaven and earth; of worshipping, serving, and obeying; of habituating ourselves and others to every religious duty; of profiting by every pious example, and letting our own light so shine, that men may see our good works, edify by our piety, and catch the flame of our devotion.

devotion. Would to God! that they who with such exquisite sensibility watch over our civil rights, were, in every instance, equally impressed with the importance of our religious interests. Alas! it is not by refined reasoning that men are seduced into a shameful indifference to the duties of a Christian life, the real happiness and honour of every individual, and the exaltation of every community. They call it philosophy; but they call it not aright. It is vain deceit. It is ignorance tricked out in the gaudy colouring of affected speculation, whispering peace, where there is no peace, and pandering to vice and vanity. But you, my brethren, who have not forsaken the assembling yourselves before God, who have at this moment, taken your part in the solemnity of public adoration, cannot be insensible to the religious blessings you enjoy, or forgetful of the reverence and affection due to the community, in which the

House

House of the Lord is established and supported.

NOR is there an individual of our nation, who names the name of Christ, that must not feel the force of this affecting motive, whatever be his principles, or mode of worship. For consider, I beseech you, that at this day we enjoy a full measure of religious liberty. While our Governors are free to chuse that mode of Christian doctrine and discipline, to which they are to give a public support, every member of our society is also free to pursue any other mode his conscience shall direct; serving God in the way that he approves, without reproach or molestation: and all joining, as I trust we do, as faithful and affectionate fellow-citizens, without envying or unreasonable prejudice, without jealousy, censure, or uncharitableness, in mutual forbearance and indulgence, in the spirit of charity and loving-kindness,

as servants of the same Master, and children of the same Family, whose head and father is Christ Jesus. Alas! this was not the state of our fore-fathers. Oppression and persecution disgraced their dreary periods; and every sect and every faction, in their turn, experienced and inflicted the severity of a rancorous intolerance. But let us cast a shade over the errors of old time. If we be indeed converted, it is our part "*to strengthen our brethren,*" to profit by our present opportunities, to cultivate the blessings of peace and benevolence, and with a godly solicitude for the spiritual as well as temporal interests of society, to cherish and propagate the principles of true religion, as our stations and abilities may admit. For this is "*the stay and the staff,*" the refuge and comfort of every individual, and the strength and sure support of every society.

AND having thus considered the grounds and reasons of the affection due to that community, by which we are protected in our dearest rights; we are in the next place to enquire how this affection is to be expressed, and what fruits it should produce. And here also, we have the royal Prophet for our direction. "*I will say, "Peace be within thee,"* or according to the translation of our publick service, "*I will wish thee prosperity.*" And, "*I will seek thy good:*" or, "*I will seek to do thee good.*" To an affectionate regard, then, for the welfare of our society, we are to add our upright and zealous endeavours to promote its welfare, according to the circumstances and situation in which God's good Providence hath placed us.

WERE I now to address myself to the great ones of this world, to those whom God hath raised up to be immediate guardians of the publick welfare, I should, by

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by God's grace, boldly enforce the sacred and momentous duties to which they are appointed; the zeal and diligence they should exert, the comforts and advantages which society justly claims from them, as national counsellors, ministers, law-givers, men of ample property, exalted station, distinguished abilities, or extensive influence. I should labour to recall their attention to that unerring wisdom which trieth the heart, and that tremendous justice which shall call every servant to a strict account of the things committed to his charge.

But, blessed be God, we have all, in our several orders and degrees, the opportunities and power of doing good to society. Nor can it be denied, that a sincere and ardent zeal for the publick welfare hath been frequently and honourably displayed, in what the pride of man calls the inferior orders of life. We have the

same affections with our superiours, and
 naturally the same judgment to discern
 the real interests of a country, so far at
 least as we have power to pursue them.
 We have the same motives to endear us
 to society. And such is the unsuspecting
 ardour of our publick spirit, that those
 above us may have sometimes found it
 an useful instrument of their sinister pur-
 poses, and betrayed us into faction, while
 they affected to lead us forward in a pub-
 lick cause. We may be deceived; but our
 principle is upright and honourable. And
 how effectually it hath operated for the
 advancement of the publick welfare, let
 those bear witness who have observed the
 progress of events in this country, even
 for a few years. We may be accused of
 turbulence and faction, and rash med-
 dling in things too high for us. But that
 in our most vigorous exertions for the
 publick, we have been temperate, and
 moderate, and peaceable, as well as firm,
 and

and determined, and persevering, the present glorious aspect of our publick affairs, is an ample and an honourable proof.

AND for the comfort of the humblest and lowliest among us, let it be considered, that there is not any order, or any station, or any worldly condition, that hath not its opportunities to seek the good of our Jerusalem. He who raises up a family, "*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,*" is the friend and benefactor of the publick. He who labours diligently, soberly and peaceably in his honest calling, who reclaims the barren waste, who promotes the useful manufacture, who gives reward to the ingenious, and food to the industrious, he, I say, is the friend and benefactor of the publick: and he who in any state, conscientiously discharges the duties of his Christian calling, and acts in faithful conformity to the precepts of the Gospel, is

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at the same time the useful and the valuable citizen. For these two characters are intimately connected: and “*what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*”

NOR can I dismiss the present subject, without earnest and repeated exhortation. The situation of our country calls us to serious reflection. And let every individual among us attentively consider what is his proper conduct, in a period like the present, as a citizen, and as a subject. I shall enforce it by the authority of Saint Peter. And he hath summed it up in such expression, as should sink deep into the hearts of us all, high and low, eminent or obscure, in publick or in private life.

HONOUR ALL MEN, saith the Apostle.

And respect and honour may be due to those who even differ from us in political

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tical sentiments, or do not hold the interests of our nation so dear, as we ourselves. Let us, at least, not disgrace our cause or character, by rudeness and reviling. Beware of rash suspicions: be guarded against groundless suggestions: disdain reproach or calumny. Judge not those who may pursue the same end, with others, but not, perhaps, approve of the same means or mode of procedure. Honour all, whose abilities have been zealously and successfully exerted in our service; all who have assisted, concurred, favoured, and supported: for these are all worthy of double honour.

At the same time—**LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD.**

And let no accidental distinctions abate that love, which is at once our bounden duty, and our real interest. That false and disingenuous policy which cast us all

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at a contemptuous distance from our fellow-subjects, and rent us from each other, is, I trust, no more. Let then our bands of social union be closed and strengthened: that at length we may be one people, and one undivided nation: remembering always, that the calamities of this land have ever issued from one bitter source, the disunion of its inhabitants, and estrangement of their affections.

AND, FEAR GOD.

For the fear of God is the firm base, on which alone the happiness of every man, and prosperity of every nation, rest securely and immoveably. It is the blessed root, from which every branch of duty, springs in full vigour, is fed and enlivened, for refreshment, for comfort and protection: while *“ every plant which
“ our heavenly Father hath not planted shall
“ be*

“ be rooted up ;” and every principle substituted in the place of his holy law, shall prove their futility and presumption, who *“ speak swelling words of vanity, beguiling “ unstable souls.”*

AND lastly, we are to HONOUR THE KING.

“ So is the will of God,” in all cases, and in every government. But here, I trust, there is little need to enforce the precept, when every heart exults and every tongue proclaims the grateful love and reverence due to our gracious Sovereign : when one wish and one prayer echoes through the land, that God will give the King his judgments, and his righteousness unto the King’s son : that he may judge his people with righteousness, save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor : that his counsels may be directed by the spirit of wisdom ;

wisdom; his arm strengthened in the might of the Lord; his enemies turned back; and that in his days, and the days of his latest posterity, the righteous may flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.

SUCH should be our dispositions, sentiments, and affections: and, "*whatsoever we do,*" as fellow-christians, fellow-citizens, and fellow-subjects, "*let us do it heartily, as unto the Lord,*" from christian principles, and christian motives, in the spirit of our religion, and to the glory of God's holy name. That so, when all earthly communities shall be dissolved, and every worldly distinction of men lost in the glorious kingdom of the Lamb, we may be numbered with the ten-thousand times ten-thousand that surround the throne of God; and with the innumerable Hosts of glorious creatures, fall before the throne, in never-ceasing praise
and

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and adoration, saying, "*Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!*"

The Perverseness of Sinners
AMEN! O gracious Lord God, may thy holy name be ever praised and blessed, in all the Churches of the Saints on earth, and through all the regions of glory and immortality! chap. vii. ver. 31, 32.

And the Lord said, whereunto then shall I liken the Men of this generation? and what are they like?

They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

THE immediate design of this similitude is to represent the perverseness of the Jewish nation, and especially of those Pharisaical

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The Perverseness of Sinners.

Preached at St. JAMES's, WESTMINSTER.

ST. LUKE, chap. vii. ver. 31, 32.

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~~Pharisaical pretenders to sanctity and~~
 knowledge, who rejected every gracious
 discovery of God's will, in whatever
 manner, and by whatever messenger it
 was conveyed. John Baptist declared
 the immediate appearance of the Messiah;
 and exhorted them to prepare for his
 reception, by repentance and amend-
 ment: but he lived in solitude, and
 abstinence: and they said, "*He hath a*
" Devil." They rejected his exhortations
 as the effects of lunacy and possession.
" The son of man" came "*eating and*
" drinking." His course of life was
 publick, and his demeanour free. He
 mixed with their assemblies and social
 meetings; taught, and exhorted, without
 austerity. For their former objection there
 was no pretence; but their pride and
 malice were not yet disconcerted. "*Be-*
" hold a gluttonous man, and a wine bibber!
" a friend of publicans and sinners!"—
 Such was the odious imputation.

It is this hardened resistance to all the dispensations of divine mercy, which our Lord compares to the behaviour of forward and discontented children; who cannot be prevailed on to conform to the dispositions of their fellows, but obstinately oppose and resist them, whatever temper they assume, and whatever efforts they employ to study the inclinations, and to court the compliance of associates so peevish and perverse.

We are all ready to condemn that obdurate spirit of the Jewish nation which no discoveries of wisdom, power or goodness could subdue. We are all ready to acknowledge God's amazing condescensions to this blinded people, and that their desolation was but the just recompence of this inveterate opposition to the means of grace. But God grant that the similitude of the text be not applicable also to the men of this generation! In those who

openly avow their "*evil heart of unbelief*," we find the same spirit: we trace it in their objections, cavils, and suspicions, their presumptuous reasonings, and affected speculations. We indeed profess to receive the glad tidings of salvation. We know the heinousness of our guilt and heaviness of our punishment, should we be numbered among the obstinate, the hardened, and rebellious.—And that we may not deal deceitfully with our own consciences, let me entreat your attention to a few plain and obvious considerations, which may assist our enquiries in a matter of such infinite importance.

—THAT we are blessed with a Revelation of God's will, our unerring guide; that the motives and influences of the Gospel are the most powerful that can be proposed to a reasonable creature—these are points which need no proof or enforcement. In order to be affectionately received they
require

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require only to be presented to the mind clearly and forcibly, to be weighed, examined seriously and frequently revolved. They may indeed be rejected or lightly regarded. But still further to display the goodness of our heavenly father, I mean to remind you

I. THAT the several conditions of humanity are so many different appointments of providence, to gain the attention and affections of the creature to his service, and to lead him to his final destination.—Such is our present state of discipline. In the several stages we are to pass, the characters we are to support, the advantages and endowments we have received, the voice of God himself is our direction. We hear it: and should acknowledge and obey it.

IN our earliest days, he hath placed our weakness under direction and controul;

and the first dawn of reason discovers the necessity of submission and obedience. We advance forward with warm and lively passions, but discipline and education are their salutary restraint. We are encouraged and directed to cultivate every principle which may gradually form and compleat the virtuous character: the painful consciousness of shame, the ardour for distinction, the impatience of neglect and scorn; the restless avidity with which the youthful mind "*rejoyceth as a giant to run its course*" of curious enquiry. The impressions of every thing august and lovely are at this period peculiarly vivid and transporting; and every moral principle yet, unimpaired by the corruptions of mankind, is pure and vigorous. What are these but the appointment of a merciful creator warning us to regulate our desires and allay our fervour, to improve the glorious faculties he hath bestowed, to study and to know

know ourselves, to extend and to exalt our views, to fix the love of every thing excellent and praise-worthy in our minds, and before the temptations of the world have burst upon us, to form those habits which shall render us amiable to man and acceptable to God?

INCREASING years teach us the duties of humanity, with still greater clearness. And as the powers of mind and body are gradually confirmed and perfected, man must engage in serious reflection, and important occupations. His cares, his pursuits, his dangers, his anxieties perpetually remind him to commend himself, his concerns, and dependents, to a divine protection. Each day he lives presents an example of the wretchedness and folly of every sinful indulgence. Each year's experience teaches the deceitfulness of all worldly expectations and enjoyments. Thus doth God instruct him to work out

his salvation by an active course of duty ; to be vigilant, attentive, circumspect ; and to look for his abiding place in a better life ; since this, he knows, is precarious ; and all he can possess or enjoy unequal to the desires he feels within him.

OLD age is made for solemn and devout reflection. It is the respite vouchsafed to us, to prepare for that awful change we are shortly to experience. God now reminds us every moment, by the gradual decay both of mind and body, that the day of our dissolution is at hand ; calls off our thoughts from worldly objects ; allays that violence of passion so dangerous in every earlier period ; enables us to reflect with composed indifference on the pleasures and pursuits and competitions of this world ; and displays before us the affecting objects of eternity, when we have full leisure to dwell upon them,

them, and full conviction that they are the only objects worthy our regard.

NOR is it only in the several periods of our lives, that we have the clearest intimations of God's good pleasure, but in the different circumstances and conditions of mortality; all directing us by different paths, and urging us by various motives, to the natural and proper center of our affections and pursuits.

IF exaltation and prosperity have been allotted us; of these, if inherited, so much is due to the exertions of others, if acquired, so much due to favourable interventions of Providence; and the enjoyment of them depends on so many concurring circumstances, arising from the superiour industry and ability, and the social virtues of those with whom we have to do, that a natural tendency of this condition is, to impress on us a sense
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of our own unworthiness, and to dispose us to humility and condescension. Conscious at least, that we do not claim these advantages as our right, that our fellow-mortals, as worthy as ourselves, frequently much worthier, are equally the objects of divine goodness, we must conclude that they are entrusted for purposes more gracious and more noble than the most exquisite of selfish joys. And in this we are confirmed by that complacency which prosperity inspires, and that heart-felt pleasure which arises from every effectual exertion of benevolence. Thus doth God draw us by the gentle bands of love and gratitude, through an easy path, smooth and unencumbered by worldly difficulties.

To the poor and the afflicted his dispensations are of a different kind, but no less salutary, and in the end no less benign and gracious. Their instructors

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are chastisements and visitations. Meekness, patience, fortitude, and resignation, are the virtues of their state. And their state is the appointment of their creator, to approve themselves by these virtues. Entrusted but with a small portion of worldly blessings, their affections are the less engaged by worldly blessings. By their calamity they are directed to the great source of consolation. The bitterness of their present state is the very means of fixing their affections on the joy that shall be revealed, and preparing them for happiness and peace, when the meanness and grandeur, the riches and distress, the pleasure and calamity of this world shall be all equally forgotten.

Thus it is that the Creator is pleased to operate upon the mind of man, in various ways, by various modes of instruction and admonition, suited to his
 and
 respective

respective circumstances, with the same wisdom of design, and the same graciousness of intention, in all his different dispensations.

II. AND now, my brethten, let us, in the second place, consider how these manifestations of God's will are generally received; and whether we stand acquitted of a perverse opposition to the motives and influences vouchsafed to us. I shall but represent what is too commonly observed; and this without exaggeration.

YOUTH claims an indulgence, for inattention and indifference to religion; for a dissipated pursuit of frivolous amusement, or dangerous pleasure. When at this period we are admonished to submit to discipline, to regulate our passions, and to form the momentous habits of piety and

and virtue: the answer is ready. ‘ We
 ‘ have not yet arrived at the serious and
 ‘ religious time of life. In the fervour
 ‘ and inexperience of our days, God will
 ‘ not be extreme to mark what is done
 ‘ amiss. At least we have many days
 ‘ before us to deprecate his wrath, and
 ‘ return to his service. As yet we have not
 ‘ power to govern our passions, we have
 ‘ not firmness to resist allurements. Alas,
 ‘ we must wait for a more advanced
 ‘ and strengthened period!’——But—
 “ *if thou hast run with footmen, and they*
 “ *have wearied thee, then how canst*
 “ *thou contend with horses?*”—If the first
 propensities to sin have conquered thee,
 how shalt thou contend with habits form-
 ed and confirmed?——“ *If in the land of*
 “ *peace wherein thou trustedst, they wea-*
 “ *ried thee, then how will thou do in the*
 “ *swellings of Jordan.*”—If in the disengag-
 ed time of life thy religious principles have
 yielded

yielded to the first assaults of Satan, how shalt thou reinforce them when the distractions and temptations of the world threaten to overwhelm thee?

BUT the long-suffering of God hath conducted us to the days of maturity; and our duties are again forcibly impressed on our consciences. But he who despised the instruction of his youth, he who was in vain warned of his danger, now feels the force of vicious habits. He would wilfully resign himself to the impetuosity of passion; he would obstinately abandon the business of his earlier period, and, of consequence, comes uninstructed in the part he is to assume, and unprovided to support it. He finds that he cannot do the good that he would. He flies to society: he hath business, interests, engagements, solitudes, and agitations. He devotes himself to the world: the
world

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world countenances and approves his pursuits. He cannot yet fix his thoughts upon his future destination. He must wait for the calmness and retirement of his declining days.

BUT his attachments to the wretched objects of mortality are by this time inveterate: and, alas! he finds that encreasing years are not susceptible of new impressions. So that, instead of improving this last period of humanity to the purposes for which it was vouchsafed, he looks back upon the pleasures and occupations he once pursued with a peevish dissatisfaction at his present weakness, when he can no longer dissemble or conceal it from himself: and if former vices be not yet retained, if the peculiar vices of old age have not gained total possession of his heart, indolence and indifference take the place of violent passions,

ons, and bow down the "*hoary head,*" which is "*a crown of glory*" when "*found in the ways of righteousness,*" into the most melancholy state of dotage; a state of desperate insensibility to the interests of an immortal creature.—Such is the progress of the natural man through the several stages of mortality.

NOR in our different circumstances and conditions, are we less forward in counteracting the designs of providence, and resisting the admonitions and instructions conveyed to each. In prosperity the reflections on our own unworthiness are too mortifying to be entertained. Intoxicated by pleasure, elated by flattery, relaxed by sensual indulgences, agitated by the turbulence of business and ambition, we have neither taste nor leisure for religious exercises. These are for the
vulgar

vulgar and the ignorant. Superiour spirits cannot descend to them. Station and grandeur have occupations of a different kind.

AGAIN; when visited with affliction, man turns away from his sure support and consolation; looks up with no friendly eye to the advantages of those above him, and becomes the prey of envy and repining. The necessities of the body are too urgent to admit of any attention to his spiritual part: his calamities too piercing for composed and elevated thoughts. They who are more at ease may indulge them: they who have been more favoured, may improve their advantages. He is perplexed, encumbered, and distracted; his resource must be to stupify the sense of present anguish.—

Thus are the various influences of divine grace rejected, by the young, because
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not yet arrived at manhood; by the mature, because not yet come to their decline; by the aged, because the days of vigour are elapsed; by the prosperous, because they are not depressed; by the poor and distressful, because they are not exalted.

III. AND let it be observed, in the last place, that the backslidings of man, considered in this point of view, have an aspect odious and unnatural. Frailty, error, and inattention, are the usual palliations of his guilt: nor could the most abandoned formally avow their deliberate rejection of God's mercies. Yet were we divested of self-love, we should discover a degree of malignity in our offences, similar to that of which the wretched sinner is to be sensible, when he stands before the judgment-seat of God, with all the vain suggestions
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of depravity erased utterly from his mind.

WERE God's dealings with mankind represented to us as the history of another order of creatures, with whom we were wholly unconnected: were we told that he had originally endowed these creatures with exalted faculties, and formed them for glory and immortality; that, contrary to the plainest evidences of his will, they had forsaken his service, and forfeited their inheritance: that by an astonishing dispensation of loving-mercy, in which compassion, purity, dignity and condescension were equally conspicuous, he had accepted an atonement for their offences, entered once again into covenant with them, restored them to their hopes, directed and assisted them to perform the reasonable conditions of his promised mercy; surely we should at once pronounce

nounce that the most rapturous love and gratitude, the most accurate and chearful obedience, the most scrupulous caution and attention, in their short period of trial, were but trivial returns to such unmerited goodness.—But were we told that a race so favoured, cavilled at a dispensation of such stupendous goodness ; or if not professed contemners of it, were at least indifferent and insensible, studied pretences for palliating their disobedience, and justifying their ingratitude ; that the long-suffering of God not yet exhausted, still allowed them time and opportunities of returning to their duty, frequently warned them of their danger, presented to their view the dreadful consequences of their depravity ; and was still ready to pardon and accept them : we should not readily determine whether the goodness of the Creator, or the obstinacy of such a race

race, were the subject of greater astonishment.

BUT we cannot be persuaded that this is a fair representation of our own conduct. We treat our offences with more indulgence, and think it unreasonable severity to be told that we are obstinate in a defiance to all the motives of reason, and all the mercies of God. ‘No! we
 ‘ have been careless and inattentive; we
 ‘ have felt the violence of temptation;
 ‘ we lament our infirmities: necessary
 ‘ cares and casual dissipations have distracted us; and the voice of religion
 ‘ hath been drowned in their tumult?’—

A miserable and shameful confession! that a creature frail and infirm, and surrounded with temptations, presumes to be careless and inattentive; that a creature destined to eternal glory prefers the sordid objects of corruption to the most affecting and transporting considerations that can be

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proposed to a reasonable mind and liberal spirit!

YET miserable and shameful as such pretences are, let us seriously consider whether they be justly pleaded. The life of man, degenerate as it may be, is yet not an uniform, uninterrupted course of carelessness and inattention. He is frequently alarmed by his conscience; numberless incidents there are in human life that awaken him to recollection; and which are indeed the special appointment of God for this very purpose. Have you not at some time experienced the gloomy hour of misfortune, pain, or malady? Hath your soul ever been harrowed at the sight of some dreadful example of God's judgments? Have you ever felt the terror of approaching death? What thoughts did you then harbour? What resolutions did you then form? Those thoughts and resolutions were at all times, and
and

still remain, equally reasonable and necessary. Have you been diverted from them? At this moment they force themselves upon your attention. In the present hour of seriousness and solemnity the concerns of this world are suspended: the noise of tumult and dissipation silenced. Your consciences have a fair occasion of pleading with you: and already are your past offences recalled to view. You say they have been the effects of frailty and inattention. If so, you will instantly implore the divine mercy, and resolve to act with vigilance and steadiness hereafter; and this not with a transient gleam of contrition, but with sincerity and truth, for you do not deny the necessity of such a conduct. You confess that the happiness or misery of an eternal existence depend upon it.

But if with wanton pride, or with cold indifference, we despise or neglect

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a serious application to our hearts, and a plain representation of our danger, I know no tender name for such forwardness. It is an obstinate and hardened resistance to the divine dispensations. For every ministration of his word, however despised for its weakness, is one of those various means which God employs for our salvation. It is the voice of divine mercy and compassion; it is the voice of power and authority. Would you know then, whether you be clear from the dreadful guilt of perverse and stubborn opposition to the mercies of God?—Consider the impressions now made upon your minds, and examine their effects in your future conduct,

And may the riches of divine grace yet vouchsafed to us be duly accepted and approved! That in the day when "*wisdom*" shall be "*justified of all her children*,"

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"*children*" when all the ways of providence shall appear perfect in wisdom and goodness, as well in the destruction of the proud, as the salvation of the humble, we may be found faithful, and receive the blessing of meekness and obedience, though Christ our Lord !

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our Lord!

How many persons are to be found who will
not wait for the Lord, but are impatient
and want to know the way of life
immediately, and will not wait for
the Lord to reveal it to them. They
are like the man who is in a hurry
to go to a friend's house, and will
not wait for the Lord to reveal it to them.
They are like the man who is in a hurry
to go to a friend's house, and will not
wait for the Lord to reveal it to them.
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Sinners enticing.

PROVERBS, chap. i. ver. 10.

If Sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

THE reasonableness of this precept seems to need little enforcement or illustration. If there be men so totally abandoned, as to “go to and fro in the earth, walking about, and seeking whom they may devour,” a very moderate degree of prudence might be deemed sufficient to warn us from their snares. To those of less experience in the perversions of the human mind, it might appear amazing that any should be found to listen

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listen to the voice of wretches, who although they cannot be insensible of the shame and misery to which they are reduced, would yet prevail on others to reduce themselves to the like shame and misery: that, among creatures formed for immortality, any should be found capable of yielding, in the only matter of real moment to an immortal creature, weakly yielding to the seduction of the blind and ignorant, though in temporal concerns they would deem it a ridiculous infatuation not to spurn at the like misguidance. In these, men are by no means flexible or compliant. They fix upon their object, and pursue it steadily. The careless and the indiscreet they regard with contempt and pity; with a conscious satisfaction in their own superiority. Nor do they wish to consort with men desperately insensible to their present interest: much less do they discover such allurements in their conduct;

duct, or such conviction in their reasonings, as to induce them to imitate or approve.

AND would to God, that in the interests of eternity we were equally guarded and determined ! But so powerful are our corruptions, that we gladly catch at any pretence for indulging them, and listen to every suggestion that may palliate and disguise them. The slightest encouragement, conspiring with the natural direction of our passions, gives them an additional force and violence. And the most fallacious inducements, finding us prepared to yield, gain an easy victory over those succours of reason and religion, which we ourselves shamefully betray.

THEN, we live and converse among men inattentive to the oracles of truth : men who have "*forsaken the fountain*

" of

“ *of living waters,*” the vital principles of christian purity and piety ; and have “ *hewed out unto themselves broken cisterns,*” have invented other principles and other laws, false and unjust, yet established by the sanction of opinion and authority. Hence the temptations to conformity become peculiarly forcible ; and the more so, as they assault us even in our early years, when as yet we are not sufficiently prepared for the conflict. Youth is naturally ductile and complying, ready to receive impressions, precipitate in judgment, and easily captivated by a fair exterior ; so as oftentimes to glory in an imitation of those things which are a disgrace and shame. In manhood we have our serious interests to pursue, and our connexions to support : we are to conciliate the regards of our superiours, and the respect of those below us. We must in some sort comply, we must in some degree conform to the tempers and

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and dispositions of other men. Nor is our attention always fixed on the just limits of such compliance and conformity. What is encouraged by publick favour, and established by general fashion, we adopt carelessly, without examining its real nature and tendency. In all times and stations we are but too apt to be surpris'd by our spiritual enemy; but especially is our vigilance to be excited, and especially are our minds to be fortified, against the allurements of those, if any such there be, who favour our corruptions, and enflame our passions, in seducing us from the guidance of religion, and reconciling us to the ways of folly and destruction.

For this purpose, it is to be observed, that men are enticed to evil practices, either by the example, or by the arguments and solicitations of the sinner. And it must be my part to remind
you

you of the unreasonableness of yielding to either.

I. AND first I am more especially to address myself to those who are exposed to the influence of evil example; because their danger is greater and more alarming. When seduced by our own passions, we feel our doubts and terrors: we hesitate, we suspend our pursuits, and sometimes, listening to the awful warnings of conscience, entirely abandon them. But the sinner who hath his authorities to plead, his confederates to countenance him, and his associates to encourage him, feels neither shame nor terror nor remorse. He loses the natural reverence and esteem for goodness which he finds despised by those whom he admires; and thus proceeds on his guilty course with courage and security; for others have led the way, and defied the danger. Thus, in the language of the prophet, "he

" draweth

“ draweth iniquity, with cords of vanity.”

He is strong and triumphant, for he is animated and confirmed, and even forced forward by the crowd.

It is worth enquiring what are the pretences for thus yielding to the influence of vicious examples, even against the plainest dictates of reason and conscience.

AND nothing is more common than to hear men plead—‘ We live in a world
‘ not filled with purity and perfection.
‘ Were we to distinguish ourselves from
‘ those around us they would pronounce
‘ us formal and precise. We are there-
‘ fore obliged to conform, to avoid the
‘ odious imputation of singularity.’

Now, it must be allowed, that it is by no means commendable to affect singularity in things indifferent or trivial:

and

and that an ostentatious boasting of holiness, and despising others, is repugnant to the true spirit of religion. The sincere christian may live and act in society, without the disgusting appearance of gloom and severity. He may preserve a friendly intercourse with those around him, (for such intercourse may not only be consistent with his duty, but be a part of his duty itself) he may gain the love and esteem of those with whom he is connected or conversant, may mutually receive and confer good offices, without any sinful compliances, any servile condescensions to folly and corruption. But if his lot hath been so peculiarly unfavourable, that he must appear singular to preserve his integrity, it were madness to dread such an imputation. For it is a noble and an honourable singularity. Do men fear to be accounted singularly eminent in human knowledge and wisdom? And shall they fear to be gloriously

gloriously distinguished by the greatest wisdom, the most exalted perfection of our nature? We are proud of honours and riches, because they mark our separation from the vulgar. Should we then be ashamed of the more exalted acquisitions of virtue and religion? Or should they be resigned, because, as we conceive, the greater part of mankind are insensible to their value?

YET, even here, we are apt to judge precipitately and falsely. We imagine that all mankind act and think and approve precisely in the same manner with the little circle in which we happen to be engaged; that there is no praise but in their sentence, no honour but in their practices. But this may be a vulgar and a childish prejudice, the effect of a narrow and contracted spirit, which in worldly affairs would be considered as disingenuous and contemptible. To

correct

correct such conceptions, and to enlarge their views, men traverse every region of the earth, and extend their intercourse to every order of their fellow-creatures. In the affairs of our salvation let us pursue the same course: traverse the whole creation visible and invisible; enquire into the sentiments of the wise, the good, the holy, ask what is the glory and perfection of the most exalted creatures. You are ashamed not to conform with the herd of corrupted creatures immediately about you. Be ashamed rather of such a sordid prejudice. Avoid the contagion of their example, as you wish to avoid, what you affect to dread, the imputation of singularity. They have separated themselves, with an odious singularity, from the great and august assembly of Christ's faithful servants, both in earth and heaven; from the communion of saints and angels, and the innumerable host of blessed spirits that surround

surround the throne of God. Is it singularity to unite with these? Or shall we rather add to the number of a few insignificant apostates, who have fatally detached themselves from all that is great and glorious and exalted in the creation?

‘ But insignificant as these men are, we are yet affected by their conduct and sentiments. Contracted as their sphere may be, we are involved in it, and must act in it. And unless we consent to follow their examples, we shall be reproached, insulted and derided.—Bitter as reproach may be, we are not affected by the rudeness of a lunatick; and sharp as is the sting of ridicule, we are indifferent to the laughter of an idiot. It is a small thing to endure reproach, when our own conscience doth not reproach us. Nor is it grievous to encounter ridicule, when our own hearts bear witness that we are pursuing the dictates of solid judg-

ment, of serious reason, of wise discernment. If the unerring voice of divine wisdom pronounces the sentence of approbation upon our conduct, can we be at all moved by the fantastical suggestions of the corrupt and infatuated? And what is it that such men call ridiculous or deem reproachful? A cautious attention to our actions; the free and liberal exercise of our reason and understanding; the consciousness of being made for nobler purposes than the gratification of brutal appetites; a just concern for our present peace and happiness; an extensive mind that pierces into the regions of eternity, and seeks for glory and blessedness, when all the little interests and distinctions of this world shall be utterly forgotten. If this be reproachful or ridiculous, let us pray to God that we live under such ridicule, and die in such reproach.

AND

AND what should give us peculiar comfort under the affected scorn and ridicule of the libertine is this, that it is an involuntary testimony to the intrinsic worth and dignity of goodness. Were he perfectly satisfied, did he feel a cordial comfort in the course he is pursuing, he would pursue it quietly and calmly: He would have no leisure to attend to their scruples, who act with less indulgence to their passions. But when they excite his clamour and derision, he manifestly betrays a secret uneasiness and envy at their superiority. Let us hold fast our integrity, and whatever he may pretend, he must in his heart revere and honour us. When we are influenced by his clamour and imitate his conduct, then, and then only, do we really become the objects of his contempt.

BUT the truth is, that these and such like pretences for yielding to vicious ex-

amples, have not even solidity, or even plausibility enough to support the serious examination of our own consciences. We are not formed like the brutal herd, who follow because others lead the way. We have reason to direct us; we have a law to regulate our actions. In matters of judgment, we account it slavish and disgraceful to pay implicit obedience to the sentiments of any others. In matters of practice, the slavery is no less abject, and shameful to a reasonable creature, when we are implicitly directed by their conduct.

II. And as you are not to be enticed by the example of the sinner, so neither are you to be influenced by his arguments and solicitations.

But here indeed the difficulty is much less considerable. Those who have strength to stem the torrent of custom, fashion,

fashion, and opinion, will find an easy conquest over the serious arguments of the libertine. He will tell you that 'the indulgences you regard with so much horror, cannot be so very offensive in the sight of God: for that thousands partake of them and ten thousands freely avow them: and if these are all condemned, who shall be justified?' But the answer is obvious. Truth, holiness, justice, and purity, do not change their nature, because corruption and depravity may abound. The word of the Lord standeth sure, although "*there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.*" We do not find the force of any human law destroyed by the multitude of transgressors. Much less can the multitude of transgressors invalidate the holy law of God. Or, if in civil society a more general defection and rebellion is attended with impunity, this arises only from the weakness

ness of government. But is there any weakness, any shadow of imperfection in the great Lord and Governor of the world? "*The nations*" are to him but "*as a drop of a bucket,*" and "*as the small dust of the balance;*" and were the whole race of human kind, the "*potsherds of the earth,*" to "*strive with*" their maker, yet "*the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.*" Nor could their destruction, no, were their numbers multiplied beyond all human conception, cast the least shade upon the glory of his universal kingdom,

THE licentious utterer of vain words may tell you, that "the laws of religion are made only for the gloomy and inactive." That this world was made for "our entertainment and delight. Pleasure our only good, and no real pleasure but

‘ but in the free indulgence of our ap-
 ‘ petites.’

BUT in this he deals deceitfully with you: for he feels within his own breast a terrible conviction that his search of joy and gladness hath been fruitless, as he hath not sought them where alone they are to be found, “ *in the dwellings of the righteous.*” Judge not by the tumultuous gaiety of his publick appearance. For even “ *in laughter the heart is sorrowful,*” saith the wise man. Pursue him to his retirement; and there you discover his languors, his anxieties, and his horrors. You see him startle at solitude, impatiently flying from his own thoughts, and courting the agitation of life, rushing into every scene of dissipation, to escape from himself: plunging into every brutal or frivolous enjoyment that may stupify the sense of anguish: dissatisfied, impatient, disgusted, fretful, wearied

wearied and worn out, without relish for his own base objects, and without a sense of nobler pleasures. Such is the ordinary life of this slave to worldly enjoyments. When visited by affliction or calamity, you see him of all men the most dastardly, the most desponding, the most terrified. Surely then he must have that "*wounded spirit*," which man cannot bear, much less derive succours from it, to support the infirmities and distresses of humanity.

If we wish to live in perpetual distraction, in the storm of passion, in the confusion of vanity and folly; to run the dreadful course of brutal sensuality, pain, distress, reproof, poverty, and infamy, to be conscious of shame, tortured with remorse, filled with confusion at what is passed, with horror and trembling at what is to come; if these be the pleasures we desire, then indeed we may
consent

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consent to the enticements of the sinner. But what is so disgusting in the aspect of religion, that drives men to seek for pleasure where it is not to be found? Religion denies us no pleasures suitable to our nature. In the gratification of our appetites it only restrains us within the bounds of real enjoyment. It forbids not the sweets of friendship, of tender and intimate connexions, of social intercourse, and innocent festivity; and while it admits of every gratification not unworthy of our reasonable nature, it gives sweetness and serenity, peace and composure to the mind, so as to fit us for a true relish for the good things of life.

BUT if not pleasure, you may at least be promised some present profit and advantage in consenting to the enticements of the sinner: he urges the solid motive of immediate gain. He points the way to success, and worldly prosperity. He
displays

displays before us honours, riches, power, station, distinction, with all their flattering appendages. All these he promises to our compliance. But, not to insist on the deceitfulness of such promises, let it for a moment be supposed, that worldly advantages are infallibly acquired, by renouncing the dictates of conscience and religion; that they are not poisoned by the vices of a corrupt possessor, that the plenitude of his acquisitions is not attended with scorn and hatred, envy and invective, distraction, contention and animosity, terrour and anxiety, corroding passions, pain and disease. Let it be supposed, I say, that the real enjoyment of his advantages exactly corresponds with their exterior allurements.—Still he hath but gained the advantages of a moment. I speak not of the strange and severe reverses of human affairs, to which the vicious are particularly exposed. I speak of that which “*is appointed unto all men:*”

of that awful period when divine justice shall thunder in his ears, “ *Thou fool!* “ *this night shall thy soul be required of thee.*” In that scene of anguish and terrors, when standing on the confine of both worlds, he views the things of this life in their true light, in their relation to eternity; what will then avail his ill-acquired wealth, or splendour, or exaltation? Will these, in the midst of pain and feebleness, raise him above the level of the meanest and wretchedest of his fellow-creatures? Will his sounding titles, and the outward respects of those around him, be other than insults on his miserable and abject condition? Far worse than unavailing! far worse than insults! his riches, his honours, will be stinging and scourging remembrancers of the criminal means by which he procured them; of the nothings for which he has thrown away an immortal birth-right, and sold himself to “ *dwell with ever-*
“ *lasting*

"lasting burnings." The gratifications he flattered himself with hopes of attaining are vanished; but the guilt of the acquisition remains: His *"gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against"* him, *"and shall eat"* his *"flesh as it were fire."* What would he then give to exchange with those whom he has defrauded, insulted, oppressed, circumvented; whose lowliness he has despised, or whose scrupulous integrity or piety he has derided? At what price would he purchase permission to bear the honest poverty, the innocent obscurity, that was once so frightful to his depraved imagination; and the dread of which afforded that hold by which his seducers caught and trained him to his ruin. Oftentimes hath that question of our Lord been obtruded on him: *"What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"*

"*soul?*" Now, he feels a terrible conviction of its propriety and force. Horrible as is this conclusion of a life of vanity, it is yet but the "*beginning of sorrows*" to that wretched creature who suffers himself to be seduced into the snares of sin and perdition.

Do we wish for peace and composure in this awful moment of our dissolution? Do we wish for comfort in the hour of distress and pain and agony? There is but one way to secure these blessings. Let us hold fast the purity and integrity of our profession. Let us not be carried away by every wind of fashion, custom, opinion, or delusion; and particularly before we are influenced by any examples, or listen to any solicitations, to desert the sure and straight path of integrity and religion; let us first carefully and seriously examine, whether we have not
some

some corrupt desires within our own breasts, which give weight to the enticements of the sinner, and second his endeavours to seduce us : and whether men do not really deceive their own souls, though, amidst that misery and remorse which are the consequences of their weak compliance, they may plead that they have been deceived by others. A plea most shameful to a creature whom God hath blessed with endowments and assistances for his own direction. If we are to be influenced by example, we need not chuse the basest and vilest. We have the examples of the good, the reverend, and the exalted. We have the example of our blessed Saviour, the consummate pattern of perfection. If we look for precepts, we have the words of eternal life : If for arguments or motives, we have the voice of divine wisdom to direct us, and an immortal crown of glory to encourage

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encourage us. With our thoughts and desires firmly fixed on these, we shall be blameless and harmless amidst a wicked and perverse generation: steadfast, immoveable against all the artifice and allurements of Satan and his agents: patiently expecting the reward of those who amidst the temptations and seducements of this world shall firmly and faithfully endure unto the end.

1 Peter, chap. v. ver. 7

Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

In the former part of this chapter we saw the Apostle giving such directions, both to pastors and their flocks, as are suited to their respective conditions. For the one he enjoins diligence, attention, disinterested zeal, and moderation; to the other, submission and humility; to both a firm reliance on the divine protection, and an absolute resignation of themselves to God.

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Reliance on God.

I EPIST. GEN. ST. PETER, chap. v. ver. 7

Casting all your care upon him: for he careth for you.

IN the former part of this chapter we find the Apostle giving such directions, both to pastors and their flocks, as are suitable to their respective conditions. To the one he enjoins diligence, attention, disinterested zeal, and moderation: to the other, submission and humility; to both, a firm reliance on the divine protection, and an absolute resignation of

~~all their interests and concerns to the~~
 disposal of his merciful providence. The
 precept, I say, may be considered as ad-
 dressed equally to both. And where is
 that individual among the sons of men,
 to whom it may not, with strict pro-
 priety, be addressed? Where is that
 happy mortal to be found, who never
 felt the pains of care and anxiety? In
 every circumstance and station we expe-
 rience their bitterness. Good and evil,
 riches and poverty, friends and enemies,
 sickness and health, life and death, are, all
 the sources of fear, solicitude and distrac-
 tion. But the infinite goodness of God
 hath provided a resource for calming
 man's troubled mind, and composing the
 inquietudes of his tormented spirit. "*In*
 "*the multitude of his thoughts within him,*
 "*God's comforts delight his soul.*" He is af-
 fectionately invited to seek his rest, in a
 firm and humble reliance on the gracious
 care of that Being, whose power and good-

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ness are his true support and comfort. But it may contribute both to our instruction and consolation to consider the direction given in the text more particularly. And the words themselves suggest distinctly the proper objects for our present meditation. I shall therefore lay before you, first, the duty enjoined by the Apostle of "*casting all*" our "*care upon God*:" and, secondly, the motive urged to encourage us to this devout reliance—"*He careth for us*."

I. FIRST, then, in explaining the precept of the Apostle, it seems scarcely necessary to observe, that the care he speaks of is that of this present life. As to our cares for futurity, they are not only permitted, but commanded. We are directed to strive to enter in at the strait gate, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, to watch with assiduity, to pray with earnestness,

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earnestness, that we may not enter into temptation. It is not by indolently reclining on the divine mercies, by presumptuously relying on God's promises, that we can obtain the inheritance appointed for us. We are studiously to perform, on our part, the conditions of this promised mercy: we are anxiously to aspire to that inheritance which is only to be secured by our attention and solicitude. It is for this reason that we are warned against an inordinate concern for the things of this life, that our solicitude may be employed upon its proper object, that we may seek first, that is, preferably to all other things, the kingdom of God: and that all our ardour and assiduity, all our care and vigilance, may be engaged on this one thing needful.

NOR, by casting all our care upon God, are we to understand that a reverent

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rent dependence on his good providence exempts us from that diligence in our respective vocations, which nature and religion equally inculcate. The blessings of divine providence are not promised to the indolent. We are commanded not to be slothful in business, as well as to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. And although the precept of our Saviour be, "*Labour not for the meat that perisheth,*" yet such expressions are evidently used comparatively, like many others in the holy Scriptures. Thus, when the Lord declares, "*I desired mercy and not sacrifice,*" the meaning is, not that he did not require sacrifice, during the continuance of the antient dispensation, but that he preferred the works of mercy to any outward ordinances. And so when we are commanded—" *Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life,*" the real import of the command

is

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is nothing more than, that we should labour for this more than the other, in proportion to its transcendent value.

NOR are we commanded in the text, so absolutely to renounce all worldly cares as to make no reasonable provision for the time to come, to have no attention to the welfare of ourselves, or those dependent on us, but to consign them to the care of providence, while we ourselves are careless and indifferent. Solomon sends us to the ant, to be instructed in a discreet and prudent foresight. "*If any man,*" saith St. Paul, "*provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*" And if our Lord commands us to "*take no thought for the morrow,*" and the Apostle to "*be careful for nothing,*" it is not to condemn that moderate and well directed attention to worldly interest, which the duties of our different stations evidently

dently require, but that extravagant uneasiness which men feel for futurity, those excessive anxieties which distract and harrafs the wretched spirit that admits them: those perpetual corroding cares produced by inordinate selfishness, and a slavish attachment to this world. We are commanded not to yield to such tormentors: and while we employ every just and reasonable means for promoting all our lawful purposes, to commit the event to him who governs every event through the immense circuit of creation.

THEY who by their passions or their habits, their tempers or constitutions, have experienced a bitter portion of worldly anxiety, whose feelings for themselves, or those connected with them, are quick and piercing, should consider the reasonableness of the Apostle's precept, thus explained.

You

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You are disquieted by your pursuits and desires; you fear for the events which interest you; you look forward to that futurity which you cannot pierce; you dwell upon the darkness which conceals it, with trepidation; you dread the scene which may be disclosed; you tremble for the success of all your schemes of worldly happiness. But, alas! you are not sufficiently enlightened to discern your real good, and therefore seek it where it is not infallibly to be found. You are perhaps worn down in the pursuit of riches: but riches may prove your deadly snare. You are harrassed in the service of ambition. But the greatness to which you aspire may reward you with vexation and disappointment. God knoweth what will prove your real blessing. "Trust" then "*in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknow-*" ledge

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*“ledge him; and he shall direct thy
“paths:”* yea steadily and surely; and
the ways to which his heavenly wisdom
shall conduct us, though not always
pleasing to human ignorance and va-
nity, yet shall prove the ways of
worldly comfort, and lead to everlasting
life.

AND as we are not sufficiently enlight-
ened to discern our own real good, so
neither have we ability and power to
secure it, or to obtain the objects of
our solicitude. A man's heart may
“devise his way,” according to the ex-
pression of Solomon. He may form his
schemes, he may use his means, weary
himself in the pursuit, wait the event
with anxiety or confidence; but it is
“the Lord” that *“directeth his steps,”*
it is he alone who giveth that direction
to every effort of man, and that event
to every purpose and pursuit, which his
gracious

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gracious providence requires. What then is the resource of our blindness and weakness? To commit ourselves and our concerns to the all-wise and powerful; to receive with submission what he shall appoint for us; his blessings with thankfulness, his chastisements with resignation; to acknowledge the sovereign director of the world; and to adore him in his righteous dispensations.

II. BUT the most affecting reason for "*casting all our care on God*," is that mentioned by the Apostle: "*He careth for us*." He is not only all-wise and powerful, but infinitely good, exercising loving-kindness in the earth; and delighting in the abundance of his mercies. Here is the resource and comfort of the creature, his sure support through all the perplexities of this mortal state. Heaven and earth bear witness to this gracious attribute. The unenlightened
heathen

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heathen discovers it in every object that surrounds him. The Christian receives the revelation of God's stupendous mercies with rapture and astonishment. "*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,*" is the blessed promise that cheers his present pilgrimage. And the word of truth is indeed one continued history of God's care for those who cast their care on him. Noah, Lot, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David, every patriarch and prophet, every Apostle and follower of our Lord, proclaim it. But little wonder that the worldly minded should not duly consider such affecting instances, when those blessings which every individual among us hath experienced, which the least serious attention must recall to his view, are not always received with grateful and reverent acknowledgment. In the progress of our worldly sojourn, even to the present moment, in the blessings

And as little can we judge

we have received, in the deliverances we have experienced, in the success of our pursuits, in the disappointment of our vain desires, in the mortification of our vitious passions, in every thing granted, in every thing denied to us, we have had abundant proof of that gracious care extended even to the unworthy.

BUT the impatience and ingratitude of the worldly-minded sometimes seek to conceal their odiousness in vain and presumptuous speculation. If the good providence of the Almighty extends to the concerns of this life, whence, say they, are the best of men in this life, oftentimes the most unhappy?—Alas! it is easy to discover that, in this, they reason not aright. The Lord indeed knoweth them that are his. But little can our blindness discern the real characters of those whom we call the best of men. And as little can we judge
of

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of the real nature of what are called their misfortunes. Our weakness and impatience may give that name to what may, really be striking proofs of God's providential care and goodness, in correcting and reforming, in alienating the heart from present objects, in manifesting, strengthening and exalting every christian grace and virtue, and thus working for us that exceeding weight of glory which shall be revealed, when the pangs of worldly anxiety shall be felt no more: when there shall be no more fear, or care, or perplexity.

My brethren, let us look steadily to this happy state, and we shall feel no extravagant solicitude about present objects. We shall estimate them according to their inferiour value: and of consequence, without terrour or distraction, without care or inquietude, rest on the sovereign disposer of all events. Let us
seek

seek his gracious favour, our sure re-
 source and comfort. When our offen-
 ces have alienated us from him, then
 it is that we should be terrified and
 afflicted, as wanderers without direction,
 as in danger without support, as afflicted
 without comfort. I alone, may the consci-
 ous sinner say, 'I alone stand in terrible
 ' exclusion from that goodness which sup-
 ' ports, directs and cherishes the vast
 ' collection of created beings. I alone
 ' am the wretched outcast from that mer-
 ' cy which is over all the works of the
 ' high and holy one. Yet even to me
 ' the gracious source of comfort is still
 ' open. I am spared, I am recalled, I
 ' am tenderly invited to reconcile my
 ' afflicted soul to its gracious parent and
 ' protector; the hope of the ends of
 ' the earth; who never faileth them that
 ' seek him, and will abundantly pardon
 ' the wicked, who, forsaking his evil way,
 ' turneth unto the Lord.'

IF

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If we be perplexed, let us return to this unerring guide; if we be distressed, let us seek this sure refuge. Then may we be confident that our heavenly father careth for us: and in every worldly difficulty we may feel our solid consolation. Whatever be our difficulties, whatever we may fear or suffer, he will be our deliverer: or if his gracious providence should not remove, he will give us power to support our evils.

WHENCE is it then that the common accidents of life, the slightest losses, the very apprehension of loss or disappointment, harass and torment the soul? While our attachment to the things of this world is inordinate, like Laban we are distracted at the loss of our idols. And while we are fatally inattentive to our sovereign happiness, estranged from God, despisers of the
riches

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riches of his mercy, we know not the comforts of a reverent dependence on the infinitely wise and powerful and good. Our unreasonable anxieties are the offspring of folly and transgression. The fear of the Lord, as it is the beginning of wisdom, so is it the solid principle, the source of present peace and consolation. Other fears torment and distract the mind. This allays and composes, guides us securely through the difficulties and dangers of this life, gives us hope in death, and after death conducts us to eternal peace and felicity.

THAT with godly confidence we may cast all our care on him, who preserveth our going out and coming in, grant us, O Lord, the abundance of thy grace, that we may love and serve and obey thee; that we may seek first thy kingdom and its righteousness, that for all
other

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other things may be added to us, in such measure as to thy wise and gracious providence shall seem meet: that we may be conducted by thy aid, and so pass through things temporal, that we may finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O gracious Father, through the merits and mediation of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

John 4, Chap. 19. part of ver. 23.

The hour is at hand, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

WHAT service God requires of his reasonable creatures; what expressions of reverence and adoration may be made to his greatness and our dependence; what conduct on our part may avoid his displeasure, and obtain his mercy: these are questions of the utmost moment, and such as the unassisted mind

other things may be added to us, in such measure as to thy wife and gracious providence shall seem meet: that we may be conducted by thy aid, and to pass through things temporal, that we may finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O gracious Father, through the merits and mediation of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

III

That with godly confidence we may
 be preserved, O Lord, who preserve us
 in danger, in giving us the grace to
 O Lord, the abundance of thy grace,
 O Lord, the love and the joy of the
 Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
 Amen.

XXXIX. S E R M O N XXXIX.

The Worship of God in spirit and truth.

St. JOHN, chap. iv. part of ver. 23.

The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

WHAT service God requires of his reasonable creatures; what expressions of reverence and adoration may be most suited to his greatness and our dependence; what conduct on our part may avert his displeasure, and obtain his mercy; these are questions of the utmost moment; and such as the unassisted mind of man hath ever revolved with solicitude

and anxiety. Of this we have an instance in the history whence the text is taken.

THE woman of Samaria, with whom we find our Lord conversing, as soon as she discovers him to be a Prophet, seizes the opportunity of being decided in that religious controversy so long agitated between the neighbouring nations. She asks, whether the worship paid by the Jews on Mount Sion, or that by the Samaritans on Getizim were most acceptable to God.

OUR Lord answers, that the difference of the Jewish and Samaritan service was not merely that of place; that the Samaritans did not sufficiently understand the proper object of their worship; that the saving knowledge of religion was of the Jews. At the same time he takes occasion to declare the approach of a dispensation, confined neither to place nor
time,

time, to Jew nor Samaritan; which was to put an end to all local contests, and to establish an universal worship, in all times and places, worthy of our nature, and acceptable to God.

With what rapture would the wisest of the Heathen sages have received a well attested declaration of this kind! How would he rejoice at the hopes of being taught by God to direct his adorations to the proper object, and to be delivered from the absurdities, impurities and impieties of his national worship? We *"thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."* Thus should every Christian break out in reverence and gratitude. But to elevate our minds to a true exalted sense of the blessings we have received through Christ Jesus, we should duly contemplate the nature of his dispensation,

penſation, the duties it enjoins, and the benefits it hath conferred upon us. At preſent I would but point your attention to one particular view of theſe important objects. I mean to lay before you, in the firſt place, the qualifications neceſſary to render our worſhip acceptable to God: and ſecondly, to explain how a worſhip ſo qualified is eſtabliſhed and promoted by the coming of Chriſt Jeſus.

I. AND firſt, of the qualifications neceſſary to render our worſhip acceptable to God, the ſole proper object of religious worſhip. Theſe are contained in that expreſſion in the text, of worſhipping "*in ſpirit and in truth*:" the meaning of which will be explained. And in the verſe immediately following, the ſpiritual nature of God is made the principle from which the neceſſity of ſuch a worſhip is deduced. In order therefore to render him an acceptable

table service, our understandings, in the first place, must be duly enlightened. We must form as worthy notions, and acquire as perfect knowledge of God, as our abilities will admit.

FROM false and unworthy notions of God proceeded all the abominations of the Gentile worship: all the errours of the Jewish or the Christian world. And no wonder. They (for example) who are filled with imaginations of a Deity cruel and revengeful, difficult to be appeased, and delighting in the misery of his creatures, pay him an horrid and gloomy service; submit to pain and wretchedness, and bathe his altars in blood, perhaps in the blood of their fellow-creatures, to avert his vengeance. They who represent the supreme governor of the creation the Lord and Father of his creatures, as possessed with human weakness and partiality, confining his re-
gards

guards to a few, and the inexorable enemy of all others; (and God grant that such fatal error never may be found among those who name the name of Christ!) Such men, I say, hope to approve themselves his servants by means directly repugnant to our obvious notions of religion, by cherishing a malignant hatred of those without the pale of their communion, by tyrannizing over their consciences, and by persecuting them even to death. They who are weak enough to fancy he hath human passions to be gratified, and imagination to be entertained, hope to acquit themselves of their duty, by paying an external service of forms and ceremonies, of bowings and prostrations, and all the expressions of flattery and servility; and worship him with pomp and procession, dress, sounds and pageants. While they who have been happily free from such errors, who are taught to regard the supreme being, as

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he really is, of infinite perfection, of adorable power and wisdom, pure and unerring justice, inexhaustible goodness, and paternal love, must, in proportion to the refinement of their apprehensions, pay him a more delightful and reasonable service.

BUT we are not to content ourselves with right opinions, or just speculations. When we have formed worthy notions of God, they must be frequently recalled to view, and deeply impressed upon our minds. They must be the subject of constant and serious meditation. The objects most likely to estrange us from God are ever present, and but too powerful in their influence. To correct their influence we should recur to that exalted object truly worthy of our regard. We should recal our attention to the great author of our being, and indulge in those elevated thoughts which the view of his perfections excites in us.

AND

AND this will naturally produce the next thing necessary to render our worship acceptable: a heart possessed with such affections as are suited to our just conceptions of the divine nature: such veneration as is due to the infinitely powerful and wise and holy; such an awful dread of offending, as is agreeable to infinite justice; such love and gratitude as are the suitable return to unspeakable mercy and goodness.

WE see, then, the meaning of worshipping "*in spirit*." It is worshipping with all the powers of the soul, with the understanding justly informed; the attention reverently engaged: and the heart virtuously and warmly affected.

WE are also to worship "*in truth*." That is, as our service should be sincere and spiritual, founded on good and solid principles, the genuine effusion of a
mind

mind well informed and well regulated, so it should be expressed in a manner suited to such principles, and worthy of the divine object. Not by lip-service; not by form or unmeaning ceremony; not by an hypocritical exterior, as if we could deceive him who “*trieth the reins and the heart.*”

BUT, in the first place, a due sense of the divine perfections must produce virtue and godliness in us. Nothing, we may be assured, can be acceptable to infinite purity and holiness, but what is pure and holy. Conscious of the inspection of an all-seeing eye, pierced with a sense of uncontrouled power, unerring justice, and unbounded goodness; the awe and reverence, and admiration and love, and gratitude that these demand, should appear in all our actions. And thus righteousness and moral purity are the first great part of true worship, and that

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that which gives external service any value.

NOTHING, indeed, can be a more lamentable inconsistency than to alienate our hearts from God and his law, and at the same time to pay him our bodily service. It is acknowledging him the gracious author of our being, yet neglecting or counteracting the purposes for which our being was bestowed. It is offending that purity which we praise, and provoking that justice which we extol: Ungratefully rebelling against him to whom we confess our utmost love is due; and forfeiting and renouncing all claim to that goodness by which we declare that our present being is preserved, and our future happiness secured.

AND as external homage is of no value, or is rather an abomination in the sight of God, unless actuated by inward piety,

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piety, and attended by a general practice of righteousness, so neither do these latter, necessary as they are, of themselves constitute the whole of true worship; but require the addition of such outward acts of adoration, as are expressive of a sincere and lively devotion, in order to compleat the service of beings such as we are.

If, indeed, we consider only the great and glorious nature of the Almighty, the awful majesty of infinite wisdom and unbounded power, we cannot but regard all our acts of adoration as contemptible and presumptuous. But the heart that is affected with excellence, and glows with love and gratitude, cannot suppress its emotions. They break out involuntarily into acts of prostration and effusions of piety. And these, we are assured, however disproportioned to his

AND

his greatness, will not be displeasing to the goodness of that being who "*accepts according to that which we have.*"

EXTERNAL worship is also a necessary duty, not only as ordained by God, and accepted by his gracious mercy, but as it is the means of preserving and enlivening every pious sentiment and affection. Every time we address the Almighty, the impression of his good providence, and of our weakness and dependence, is renewed within us. Every time we prostrate ourselves before him, the affections of the soul accord with our bodily expressions : And every time our adorations are publicly performed, the holy flame spreads through the souls of those around us ; the impression of an exemplary piety is propagated : "*men see our good works*" of devotion ; "*and glorify our Father which is in heaven.*"

AND

AND thus have I endeavoured to explain the particulars necessary to a spiritual and true worship: the forming worthy notions of God, its proper object; a steadfast attention to him; a heart warmed with suitable affections; and proper fruits of these, real piety and purity, and an external homage, decent, solemn and sincere.

II. I am, in the second place, to shew how this spiritual and true worship is established and promoted by the Gospel dispensation.

AND this it effects, first by enlightening our understanding.

ERROR and ignorance were the consequences of man's transgression. And they discovered themselves in the variety of superstitions and abominable rites which soon prevailed over the

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the whole earth: God, in his adorable mercy, determined to redeem mankind from this deplorable state: separated the people of Israel, in order to preserve in them the worship of one supreme being, amidst a multitude of false Gods and false worships; and gave them a religious system, composed, in a great measure, of ceremonies and external performances, calculated (so far as we may pronounce upon the designs of the Almighty) to preserve this separation, to keep them from idolatries, which had been long practised before their eyes, and with which they were deeply affected; and at the same time, to continue a memorial of the great deliverance to be vouchsafed through the anointed. But the design of these ceremonies was at length mistaken. They were supposed to have a natural and inherent worth. In vain did the prophets frequently inculcate, that “to obey was better than sacrifice;”

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"*sacrifice*;" that God "*desired mercy and not sacrifice.*" The law which ordained them was still in force; and men at once quieted their consciences and gratified their passions, by substituting a scrupulous attachment to them in the place of real and substantial virtue.

BUT when Christ appeared, the true intent of these ordinances was fully declared. He taught, that the Jewish law had been given, not because it was the best, but because the people were, as yet, incapable of a better: and therefore were to be led to the Messiah by a preparatory discipline. Thus were the corrupt deprived of all their vain resources, and the good and virtuous were more at liberty to exert themselves in a truly spiritual service, by being disengaged from a burdensome train of ceremonies.

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AND the Jews' not only misconceived the service which God required, but entertained some false notions of his nature. They were deluded, for instance, by an error natural to the pride of men so distinguished, that he was a God whose favour was confined to them; and that the rest of mankind were a race abandoned to destruction. But the Gospel speaks more worthily of the divine nature. We are taught, that he is no respecter of persons; that he is "*not willing that any should perish*;" but "*that all*," and not one particular nation only, "*should come to the knowledge*," and enjoy the blessings "*of the truth*."

BUT the ignorance of the Gentile world was still more deplorable: and therefore the blessings they received from the day-spring which visited them, the more remarkable. What distracted all

their sages the Gospel made easy and certain; and enlightened the simple and the lowly with discoveries infinitely beyond the reach of human wisdom. Those national rites which policy had invented, to turn the superstition of the vulgar to the purposes of government, Christianity pronounced vain and abominable: and by enforcing and exalting moral goodness and sanctity of heart, which never made a part of any national religion in the Gentile world, taught men to secure their present and future happiness, in a way much more agreeable to the dignity, and much more worthy the author of our nature.

And as the Christian dispensation enlightens the understanding, in the same degree doth it promote a spiritual and true worship, by enlivening and exalting our virtuous affections.

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THE more worthily we conceive of God, the juster and sublimer notions we form of his nature and perfections, our reverence and adoration must be the more exalted and enlivened. Every new discovery of his dispensations, every clearer view of his ways, and the righteousness and graciousness of his dealings, are new incentives to praise and bless, *“and bow down,”* and *“kneel before”* him. By being taught to regard him as the author not only of our being but our redemption; by being assured, not of temporal happiness, which alone was promised in the Jewish law, but of a glorious immortality, as the reward of our obedience, our love and gratitude are elevated and increased. And thus, as necessarily as any power in nature produces its ordinary effect, do the truths of Christianity tend to establish the most exalted piety and devotion that our nature is capable of; nor can any thing prevent

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prevent their proper influence but the grossest prepossessions, or most supine inattention.

AND those affections which the doctrines of the Gospel are so fitted to raise in us, its external rites are equally adapted to confirm and cherish. These are neither burdensome nor perplexing: few in number; significant and affecting: such as are suited to our present state; and such therefore as we cannot but acknowledge the divine goodness in appointing.

AND now, my brethren, having seen what is that spiritual and true worship which God requireth, and what is that direction and assistance by which he enableth us to perform it, the inference is obvious. We are to bless his holy name, for the light vouchsafed to us;
and

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and we are to labour strenuously, that we may "*walk as children of light.*" We are to remember that we are Christians: bound by the tender mercies vouchsafed to us to strain every faculty, to approve ourselves worthy of this awful name. And particularly when we approach the throne of grace, to approach with true reverence, with pure hearts and lively affections: knowing the importance of genuine and enlivened piety, in this precarious and too often distressful state of things: and considering that while we breathe out our spiritual and true devotion, and unite with our fellow Christians in solemn strains of adoration, we prepare ourselves for the society of those exalted creatures, who, in the regions of eternal happiness and glory, "*rest not day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, 'which was, and is, and is to come.'*"

To

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To this blessed society that we may be finally united, God of his infinite mercy grant, for his sake who *"was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood; and made us priests, to offer unto his name the pure offering, the incense, which is the prayers of saints."*

MATTHEW, chap. XL. ver. 10.

*And from the days of John the Baptist un-
til now, the kingdom of Heaven suffereth
violence, and the violent take it by force.*

THIS declaration of our Lord may ap-
pear strange and unaccountable to the
mass of this generation. Indifferent to
the price of great price, or not forcibly
impressed with its transcendent value,
they may be surprised to find that what
we receive coldly, or reject obstinately,
should have ever been the object of ar-
dent

S E R M O N XL.

Kingdom of Heaven taken by violence.

Preached at ST. ANNE'S, DUBLIN.

MATTHEW, chap. xi. ver. 12.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

THIS declaration of our Lord may appear strange and unaccountable to the men of this generation. Indifferent to the pearl of great price, or not forcibly impressed with its transcendent value, they may be surprized to find that what we receive coldly, or reject obstinately, should have ever been the object of ardent

dent solicitude; or ever pursued with the same violent and passionate earnestness with which we prosecute the dearest interests of mortality.

BUT the text assureth us, that in the beginning it was not so. And when we have duly weighed the import of these words, and the declaration contained in them, we shall be naturally led to such reflections as may be profitable for correction and instruction in righteousness.

You are not to be informed that by "*the kingdom of Heaven*" we are to understand the dispensation of Christ's Gospel, the full and final revelation of God's will by the ministry of our Lord. The commencement of this dispensation is dated from the days of John the Baptist, who openly declared the immediate appearance of the Messiah, and publicly taught the doctrine of repentance. And when

when it is said "*from the days of John the Baptist until now,*" we are not to understand these words restrictively, as if the kingdom of God was now fulfilled, or the violence of seizing it had ceased; for the words contain not only a declaration of present, but a prediction of future events: accordingly we find in the corresponding passage of St. Luke, the expression is general and indefinite. "*The law and the prophets were until John.*" The Jews were left to the guidance of their own teachers, until the forerunner of their Messiah commenced his ministry, but—"since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." The preaching of Christ's Gospel is begun, is continued, will proceed and prosper: it is already operating on the minds of men, and its operation will not cease: every man, that is, every man who embraceth it, is now and must and will be pressingly
zealous

zealous to seize the blessing.—But we must attend more particularly to these expressions of ‘the kingdom of God suffering violence, and the violent taking it by force.’

FROM such expressions we are not to conceive that any obstacles are raised to our salvation by the secret counsels of God. Eternal life is his free gift through Christ, who inviteth and affectionately entreateth all men to come to him, to learn of him, to drink of the fountain of living waters, to their everlasting refreshment. The violence here spoken of is nothing more than that firmness and force of resolution, which layeth hold on salvation notwithstanding every obstacle, every prejudice against the truth, every passion that may alienate the heart from it, every worldly interest that may oppose it. It is the result of that fervour of zeal expressed by the Apostle when he
exclaims

exclaims in triumph, "*who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or persecution? or famine? or nakedness? or peril? or sword?*"

THE import of the whole text, therefore, may be thus expressed. The Gospel dispensation is indeed clearly and forcibly revealed: and though many are the obstacles to its progress, yet numbers shall be found whose spiritual strength and courage shall surmount them all: who shall break through all difficulties and discouragements, and ardently lay hold on the blessings of this dispensation.

AND from the words thus explained I shall take occasion to lay before you the particular difficulties which the early converts to Christianity encountered, whether Jews or Gentiles. It will be found a subject fruitful in pious and profitable reflections.

reflections. And it must be my part still further to lead you to such reflections.

But first as to the difficulties encountered by the early converts to Christ's doctrine. He was in the first place sent to the house of Israel. And to the glad tidings of his kingdom were opposed their prejudices and prepossessions, their passions, corruptions, and interests. Their attachment to the ceremonial law was at this period powerful; their submission to their teachers implicit and profound. Proud of their national distinction, as God's peculiar people; yet little careful to approve themselves to the God of purity, by judgment, justice and mercy, they indulged their passions, they corrupted their hearts, they were sensual, revengeful, turbulent: and their own historian imputes the destruction which soon after fell upon their nation to no other cause but their manifold and abominable vices.

and is best

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They looked indeed for a redeemer; but it was for one who should redeem them from their present state of subjection, who should lead them to wreak their vengeance on their enemies; who should satisfy their pride with worldly greatness, and satiate their avarice with the possessions of the Heathen; who should relax the precepts of their moral law, and leave them, or encourage them, to a free indulgence of their several passions. To such men, their teacher and deliverer appeared without form or comeliness; of lowly birth and humble station. His kingdom, he declared, was not of this world: that it could be received only by those who looked down with indifference on riches and glory and pleasure; by the pure, the peaceable, the humble and the upright: that, instead of weakening the obligations of their moral law, he came to enforce, to extend and to exalt its precepts: that the righteousness of his

disciples

disciples must exceed even that of the wise and reverend of their national guides: that it must be exemplary, that it must be perfect, and dearer to the heart than the most darling objects of mortality, even than a right hand or a right eye.

WHEN such a doctrine was preached to such a people, no wonder that the body of their nation were deaf to their divine teacher, and hardened against the evidences of his mission. Yet "*as many as were ordained,*" that is duly disposed in their hearts, and these in great numbers, searched the scriptures, weighed our Lord's miracles, sacrificed all their prejudices, broke through the bonds of authority and prepossession, despised the displeasure and scorn of their superiours, forsook all their little stock of worldly comforts, and, with a violence of zeal too mighty for every obstacle, forced and pressed

pressed forward to the way of eternal life.

YET greater and more forcible was the resolution of the Gentile profelyte. To the Jew, Christ's Gospel was indeed an offence: yet there was some ground from which his prejudices might be assailed. The doctrines of the fall and of the promised seed were familiar to him. The divine authority of his religious constitution was acknowledged. The appeal was made to his own prophets. But to all these things the Gentile was a stranger. To comprehend the doctrine proposed, he was previously to be informed of many things remote from his conception: he was to learn the history of a people whom he despised. And when he had surmounted these obstacles, and came to weigh the evidence of the new doctrine, his resolution was

exposed to still severer trials. His mind was not always prepared for the good feed. It was already occupied by opinions and prejudices. The Gospel pronounced the religion of his country abominable and devilish, required him to renounce all that he had held venerable, exacted the strictest purity from the corrupt and licentious, exposed its votary to the scorn of those who were called wise, to the terrours of the powerful, to the severities which jealous governours exerted, to suppress a doctrine held dangerous and pestilent. Yet in despite of every prepossession and every worldly discouragement, numbers were found to lay hold resolutely on the blessed hope of glory. The glad tidings were spread wide by instruments apparently the most insufficient. But the weakness of God was stronger than men. Believers rushed from every quarter into Christ's fold: stood

stood firm against scorn and contradiction and persecution ; multiplied, and prevailed, till the rulers and princes of the earth were at length compelled to “ *cast their crowns before the throne of the Lamb.*”

FROM this victorious progress of the Gospel, men of speculation deduce an additional argument of its truth and divinity. When the weakest of men were engaged in so prodigious an attempt, and attended with such prodigious success, reason, say they, must teach us, though the scriptures were silent, that the Lord himself must have wrought with them. But it is my present purpose rather to compare this zeal and ardour of the earlier converts to Christianity with our own dispositions who at this day name the name of Christ. Many of them had but the same foun-

dation of their faith with us: the same
 rational, though not irresistible evidence,
 the same holy Scriptures for their di-
 rection, the same hope of immortality
 for their encouragement. They were
 zealously affected; for the religion they
 embraced had its full impression: they
 studied, they examined, they meditated;
 they possessed their souls with all the
 motives and influences of the new doc-
 trine; it became irresistible, delightful,
 comforting, transporting: they embraced
 the word of life with eagerness, they re-
 tained it with unshaken constancy: even
 their enemies bore testimony to its in-
 fluence on their general conduct. We
 are too often cold, languid, indifferent,
 wavering, lapsing, and in our practice
 fatally inconsistent with our profession.
 Whence this difference? Comes it not
 from hence, that our religious impressi-
 ons are not deep, firm, fixed, and
 lively?

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lively ? We are perpetually seduced from the great object in which our thoughts and desires should center. In the serious or the solitary hour we are affected. But the torrent of worldly cares and pleasures soon bursts upon us, and tears us from our momentous concerns. Instead of exerting that violence, that spiritual strength and courage, by which the kingdom of heaven is taken, we yield to the first assault of the adversary ; and we call this treacherous desertion of God's service, frailty and weakness.

AND yet if our attachment to religion prove not sincere and zealous, we are without excuse. In engaging in the service of our heavenly Master, we have no prejudices or prepossessions to subdue, no discouragements to retard us, no persecutions to

to deter us from adhering faithfully to his service,

STILL, however, let it be observed, that the declaration of the text is in some sort applicable even to us. It is not without care and attention and resolution that the best and purest among us can lay hold steadfastly on the way of salvation. Let the truths and motives of the Gospel be ever so forcibly impressed upon our minds, yet our nature is weak and corrupt, seducements powerful, temptations dangerous. We have the pride of life; the giddy course of pleasure, the cares and competitions of this busy world, to ensnare and to distract us; the example of the careless and indifferent, and the perverse speculations of the libertine to seduce us. Confidence and security are utterly inconsistent with our present state of trial. To our serious

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ous impressions of religion, we must add frequent and devout reflection; to our reflection, vigilance; and to our vigilance, fervent and constant prayer, that we may be stablished, strengthened, and supported by the divine assistance. Thus it is that we are to work out our own salvation, in this our day of discipline.

AND let it not be thought a hard saying, that the blessed inheritance of eternal glory is not to be obtained without attention, and resolution, and self-denial. Look upon the worldly-minded. With what attention, with what resolution, with what self-denial, do they pursue the wretched objects of their wishes! How early do they rise, and how late are they to take rest, what toils do they chearfully endure, what cares and distractions do they willingly embrace, for the meat that perisheth, for
the

the advantages of a day!—The advantages shall we call them? The illusions, rather, of an untutored imagination.

OR let us consider the slavery of those who seek the kingdom of Satan. They must indeed lay hold upon it by an odious violence to every reasonable and generous principle. They must contend against the force of conscience, the influence of instruction, the warnings of reason, the terrors of example, the anguish of passion unsatisfied and unsubdued, the piercing sense of shame and degradation, and the horrible affliction of standing alienated from God, and from every thing noble and exalted in his creation.

NEVER may we, my brethren, submit to such painful and ignominious bondage.
No.

S E R M O N . XL. 329

No. Let us force our way vigorously to the path of salvation. Let us cleave steadfastly to the hope of our calling. For it is our comfort and our joy in this life. And he whom we serve, and he whom we fear, will come quickly: and his reward is with him.

S E R M O N XLI.

Communion of the Saints.

HEBREWS, chap. xii. ver. 22, 23, and part
of 24.

—Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto
the city of the living God, the heavenly
Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company
of Angels,
To the general assembly and church of the
first-born which are written in heaven,
and to God the judge of all, and to the
spirits of just men made perfect,
And to Jesus, the mediator of the new co-
venant.

IT is deemed a great advantage by the
children of this world, that a man's lot
hath fallen in a distinguished country, in
an

an eminent society, and among the most eminent characters in such society : that he converses with the great, and enjoys the favour of the exalted. Such a situation is supposed to elevate the mind ; to make us careful and circumspect, that our conspicuous station may be duly supported, and that we may provide things honourable and dignified in the sight of those around us.

‘ I am ennobled and exalted,’ saith the man of worldly eminence, ‘ I dwell in courts and palaces, I am admitted to the presence of kings. What then should be my deportment?’ But, have we such motives to elevate and refine our sentiments, we who live and act in lower stations, in privacy, in obscurity, or abasement? Such doubts, my brethren, become the worldly-minded, creatures that confine their prospects and desires to the circle of present objects.

But

But, however lowly and debased, unnoticed and obscure, the christian hath that dignity of character which infinitely transcends the little honours and distinctions of a day. He is associated with all that is unutterably august and reverend. Heaven and earth is the stupendous theatre of his actions.

It is not spiritual pride that presents some visionary glories to his fancy. It is not enthusiasm that transports him beyond the sphere of present objects. He rests with an humble, yet firm reliance, on God's promises. He knoweth that the word of the Lord is sure. Nor is his faith less rational because he rejoiceth in the hope of his calling, and is affected by the most animating assurances of divine goodness. Among these we justly rank the doctrine of the text. It is expressed with that fulness and magnificence, which indicate a mind warmed
and

and elevated with its subject, and labouring under the violence of its impression. It cannot be attentively received without some part of that rapture and veneration which evidently possessed the Apostle. But my present purpose shall be to consider the several particulars recounted in the text. And when these are duly weighed, we shall be naturally led to the inferences deducible from this doctrine.

"Ye are come," saith the Apostle, *"unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."* Ye are called, not to an alarming and tremendous dispensation, promulged, like that of the Jews, with every circumstance to dismay and terrify; but to a covenant of joy and mercy, presenting you with the most delightful and transporting objects. By this your Christian calling, ye are even now invested with
great

great and ennobling privileges. As Mount Sion is said to be "*they joy of the whole earth;*" as God, by the manifestation of his power and glory, is said to "*dwell in Jerusalem;*" as "*the name of the Lord*" is said to be "*declared in Sion, and his praise in Jerusalem;*" that now is; so, there is another Sion, the seat of everlasting joy, and another Jerusalem, where the power and majesty of the Almighty are displayed in the fulness of glory. From the very moment of your first engaging in the service of our Lord, a title to admission into this city of the living God was bestowed on you: and every moment of your faithful service brings you nearer to your consummation. For "*he that testifieth these things, saith, surely I come quickly:*" and they that "*do his commandments,*" have a covenanted right, to "*enter in, through the gates into the city.*" To illustrate this our inestimable privilege, we are some-
times

times represented in this state of probation, as travellers in a foreign land, who still retain the rights of their community, and, on their return, enjoy them fully. But however we may be strangers and pilgrims upon earth, we are still within the kingdom of our heavenly sovereign; protected by his power, governed by his laws, and supported by his goodness. Nor are we far from the seat of his immediate presence: but at the gate, ready to enter, and just on the point of enjoying all the riches and glories of our abiding place.

BUT the Apostle proceeds further to describe that blessed society, to which we are even now united, and with whom we are to hold visible communion, in this "*city of the living God.*"—"Ye are
" *come to an innumerable company of an-*
" *gels.*"—Yea, to that "*great multitude*
" *which no man could number,*" of every
order

order and degree of these superiour beings who kept their first estate; whose praises of the "*Lord God omnipotent*" are "*as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings:*" who in all their stupendous pre-eminence, their exalted powers and faculties, the ardour of their love, the might of their ministrations, are still our fellow-creatures, fellow-servants, and fellow-subjects: "*ministering unto them that are heirs of salvation:*" even now rejoicing in their joy; and anon, uniting with them in the same rapture of adoration, and the same zeal of obedience.

YE are also come, "*to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven.*" This phrase, as well as the foregoing, hath an allusion to the Jewish œconomy. Ye are come by virtue of your Christian vocation not merely to those thousands of Angels said

to be attendant at Mount-Sinai; but to innumerable multitudes, to the whole vast assembly which no man can number of the same glorified creatures. And ye are come, not to the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel, expressed by their great names, with their pedigrees declared after their families. But to an *"assembly of the first-born which are written in heaven."* By *"the first-born"* we may understand, those who have a priority of inheritance; or in general those to whom the inheritance is assigned. Its signification in scripture is even still more general, as the term is used to denote any extraordinary rank; thus, by the *"first-born of the poor,"* is meant those of most distinguished poverty: or again, any superiour excellence or eminence; as Christ is said to be *"the first-born of every creature:"* that is, begotten from eternity before all created beings,

ings, and in glory and dignity unutterably superiour. And by being "*written in heaven*," we are to understand, not predestined to the inheritance, by any arbitrary decree, independent of their own conduct, but distinguished by divine wisdom, as creatures fitted for the inheritance, and therefore appointed by divine goodness to the enjoyment of it: and (to illustrate things spiritual by earthly similitudes) enrolled as it were, and numbered, among the citizens of the city of God.

We are come to the "*general assembly*" of these first-born: not to the collection of any one particular nation, or people, or part of the creation, but to the whole united assemblage of all those excellent beings, who, in the most extensive sense, form the universal church of God: whether they have lived on earth, in sincere conformity to the divine will, however, or in whatever degree, it hath

been discovered to them: or whether through the immense circuit of creation, the sons of God may labour faithfully for the gradual advancement of their nature, and for the attainment of that fulness of perfection, to which their heavenly father may at length exalt them. Come they from the east, or from the west, of this earthly habitation; whatever be their tribe, or people, or local distinctions, or particular dispensations; come they from any of the various regions of immensity; with them is our fellowship, and with them it is given to us, to "*sit down in the kingdom of God.*"

BUT to crown our glory and felicity, to this adorable Being are we also united; "*to God the judge of all;*" who discerneth and distinguisheth this mighty collection of creatures, assigning their degrees and orders; and communicating to all their just proportions of his favour, and the blessings

blessings of his presence. From the throne
 of his majesty, surrounded with the "ten
 thousand times ten thousand" of the most
 glorious of his creation, He "humbleth
 himself to behold the things" not "in
 heaven" only but "in earth." He
 hath "again begotten us," even his
 wretched lapsed creatures, "to a lively
 hope," "granting us power to become his
 sons." Even He, "the King of Kings,
 and Lord of Lords" "dwelleth with him
 that is of a contrite and humble spirit."
 He "saith to the prisoners, Go forth; to
 them that are in darkness, Shew your-
 selves." So that "they which wait upon
 him, shall renew their strength, shall
 mount up with wings as eagles," and his
 "righteousness shall not be far off:" neither
 shall their "salvation tarry."

And here one might expect to find the
 Apostle closing his grand description. Yet
 he returns to a subject that seems to have
 taken

taken total possession of his faculties, and dwells still on the stupendous greatness and blessing of our communion.—Ye are come “*to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.*”

By the spirits of the just, or righteous, exalted to a state of perfection, we are, probably, not precisely to understand the very same collection of creatures already recounted, but a particular society, not separate indeed, but distinguishable in the whole grand assemblage, and clearly distinguished by the divine person, under whose banner the triumphant host is ranged; “*Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.*” The meaning of this addition we may suppose is this, ye are by your vocation admitted to communion with the universal assembly of beings glorified; or ready to enter into glory, together with their all-mighty author, and
all-

all-gracious sovereign: but particularly ye are united with the body of your fellow-christians, whose warfare is finished, and their crown received; who are justified, or accepted as just, through the great captain of their salvation; presented to the throne of mercy, spotless, by the blood of the Lamb, and have received that blessed sentence, "*To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne.*"

NOR doth it seem unreasonable to suppose that our future, visible union with this particular society, may be the means of encreasing our joy. Our connexion may be like that of brethren according to the flesh; of the same immediate family; included in the same covenant; purchased by the same price; impressed with the same sense of mercy; exulting, and congratulating each other on the same deliverance; with understandings enlarged, so as no longer to see through a glass

a glass darkly, but to discern clearly the vastness of that mercy we have received, the full value of redemption, the wisdom, the justice, the goodness of the means and manner of it: and with affections suitably enlivened and exalted, to rejoice for ourselves and for our brethren; to give glory to the Father who appointed these means of our salvation, to the Son, who wrought it, and to the Holy Spirit, by whom we were enabled to perform the conditions, and to obtain the blessings of the Christian covenant.

ON such a subject indeed, the mind of man is naturally transported, and the imagination impatient to run its course. We might attempt a faint description of the blessings we are to enjoy in this glorious society; of the understanding strengthened with new powers, and enriched with new illuminations; of the exquisite refinement and exaltation of our affections,

affections, of enlarged faculties and new endowments. But *“ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”*

Let us then restrain our speculations. And surely the sublime doctrine now before us must be considered with reverence and humility and awful fear. For *“ what is man, that God hath been so mindful of him?”* and what are we, whom he hath destined to such exalted honour? Allured from his service by the mean and transitory enticements of this mortal state; tottering under the burden of our offences, in the race that is set before us; insensible to the vast value of our prize; with thoughts and desires and pursuits confined to the abject societies of the world; not considering, and scarcely comprehending the majesty and dignity of our destination; and the glory of that society in which our fellowship is appointed.

WOULD

Would to God! that the man, who despises the riches of God's mercy, could for a moment turn his thoughts to the great and glorious inheritance which he is in danger of forfeiting for ever. How piercing must be his affliction (for I now proceed to the inferences from the Apostle's doctrine) and how dreadful his consternation, when he thus communeth with his own heart! And is this the glory ordained for me? And is this the society to which I was appointed? Woe is me! for I have renounced the honour and happiness of my being. I have estranged myself from my creator and deliverer; and stand in odious separation from every good and glorious being through the infinite extent of his creation. I am already come, not to the splendour of his courts, and the blessings of his presence, but to chains and darkness and the dungeon, to wailing and gnashing of teeth, to the accursed spirits,

'spirits, and to Satan their first-born,
'and most distinguished in malice and
'miserly.' *Job. How in converse and*

If we have transgressed and rebelled;
now is the appointed time for such re-
flections; and now should we industri-
ously impress our minds with the height
of glory, from which we are fallen, that
before we be desperately hardened, be-
fore our souls be totally embruted, and
have their irrevocable portion in the se-
cond death, we may burst the bonds of
Satan, and labour to regain our blessed
station.

To the sincere and pious Christian
there is less need to point out the glories
of his inheritance. His faith is steadfast,
and his hope enlivened. And happy
would it be, were it the sole business of
this place, to applaud, to congratulate,
to encourage, to dwell upon the glorious
objects

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objects

objects of our pursuits in triumph and exultation; or even to exhort to patience and perseverance in well-doing. This is indeed the first and proper inference from the consideration of that glory which shall be revealed. But, alas! the word is addressed to the weak and wavering, to the mind unused to exalted thoughts, confined to present objects, or, if the interests of eternity should be entertained, receiving them with a transient and slight attention; forming inadequate conceptions of our Christian calling, and vainly expecting to reconcile the service of God, with the slavery of this world. To such professors of Christianity, we must especially recommend a serious and solemn attention to the riches of our inheritance. These are not promised to the weak and wavering, but to "*him that overcometh.*" They are not purchased by slight and temporary efforts, but by steadiness and resolution and uniformity. The world
abso do must

must in some degree engage us; for our glory is to be obtained by an active course of duty in this our day of discipline and probation. But it is not for creatures made as we are, redeemed at such a price, and destined to such exaltation, to confine our affections to the sordid objects of mortality; to know no pursuit more dignified than labouring to acquire them; no joy more transcendent, than that of displaying the possession of them, in all the elegance and pride of life. How would the great ones of the world despise their associate, who without regard to station, to honour, to all the advantages of eminence and affluence, should descend to the pursuits of childishness, of ignorance, and meanness? How then must they themselves be regarded by those whose conversation is in heaven; by those glorious beings who enjoy their pre-eminence, or those who labour for the
same

same pre-eminence? And, what is of unutterably greater moment, what must be their vileness in the sight of the infinitely wise and glorious!

Are ye votaries of pleasure? Are ye captivated by riches? Are ye impatient for honour and distinction? Go to the humble Christian, and learn of him. He is patiently securing his approach to the source of everlasting pleasure, labouring for the riches that are permanent and incorruptible, aspiring to the honour which cometh from God, for distinction among the most exalted of the children of his heavenly father. And in his wise and blessed progress, he is not tortured by enyy, harrassed by contention, amused by vain hopes, wearied by fruitless endeavours, galled by disappointments, corroded by perpetual anxiety, cut off suddenly from his enjoyments, or mortified

fied by finding them decentful to his expectations.

IN one word, if the soul of man be really absorbed and satisfied by worldly things, we may be assured that it is sunk to an unnatural state of abasement: and his satisfaction is that of the reptile that grovels in the dust. No voice, therefore, can be more friendly to him, none which he should receive with more earnestness and joy, than that which rouses him from his odious insensibility. And whenever we are in danger from the allurements of the world, whenever we feel our spirits yielding, and becoming captive to them, then should every consideration of real moment be summoned to our assistance. We should lift up our hearts, and habituate them to conceive the real value, and to aspire to the real dignity of our final destination.

AND

AND great occasion likewise is there that we should be solicitous to possess our souls with sentiments of true dignity, when the pride of worldly advantages steals into our hearts, and we are degraded to such meanness as to exult in the appendages of this state of humiliation.—‘Come not near me, saith the
‘man of worldly greatness, for I am thy
‘superiour.’ Let him then enjoy his superiority unenvied, but not unpitied; for pitiable is that blindness which conceives the excellence of man to consist in faring sumptuously, being arrayed gorgeously, in pleasing the fancy, indulging the passions, lying down in ease and indolence, and rising to dissipation and amusement, to receive the insidious homage of dependence, and to listen to the false addresses of interested flattery. If this be our glory, let us not pretend to refined sentiments and exalted spirits:

For

for we are insensible to true glory, the glory of a redeemed creature.

AND let the faithful follower of Christ Jesus, who in this life is depressed and lowly, learn to estimate his lot, by advantages superiour to all the most dazzling distinctions of this world. He is not heir to uncertain riches; but he is heir to the inestimable treasures of eternity. His conversation is not in earthly palaces; but in the courts of his house who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. If he be depressed, he hath his abiding place on high; if he be afflicted, he hath his almighty comforter to wipe away the tears of his affliction, and to convert his mourning into joy.

BUT what is the condition of humanity, or what state of youth, health, strength, age, eminence, or obscurity, prosperity or distress, that is not directed,

assisted, supported, ennobled, comforted,
 by that lively faith which transports us
 beyond the precincts of mortality, and
 places us in the immediate presence of
 the all-glorious author of our being, and
 in the society of his most glorious crea-
 tures? It is the firm assurance of being
 raised, and united to the assembly of the
 blessed, the ardent solicitude to obtain
 this illustrious inheritance, to burst from
 the gloom of death into the exalted state
 of felicity prepared for the faithful, which
 should regulate every action of our lives,
 and every affection of our hearts. Every
 thing we wish or seek, or pursue,
 should be directed to the great scope and
 purpose of our being. Unless we be
 shamefully contented to crawl through
 this mortal state, insensible to God's gra-
 cious promises, obstinate in rejecting
 mercy, and enduring the full weight of
 justice, "*treasuring up wrath against the*
" day of wrath ;" and hereafter behold-
 ing

ing the exaltation of our fellow-creatures with anguish, and envy, and hopeless malice, and rage, and confusion and despair.

No! my brethren, let our hearts be surely fixed on the glory which shall be revealed. Let us not exchange our birth-right for meanness and vanity. Let not present pain or poverty, or ease, or care, or pleasure, or grandeur, or any worldly advantage, or any worldly distress, divert us from the only object worthy of creatures "*made in the image of God,*" and "*called unto his kingdom and glory.*" We know that the fashion of this world passeth away: but we know that our Redeemer liveth. And behold he cometh quickly, and his reward is with him,

And may the gracious Spirit of the Lord purify our hearts and enliven our affections, that the enticements of this

world never may have power to distract
and debase us; that we may look with
a stedfast eye to the inheritance of him
that overcometh: that we may be num-
bered with the nations of them which
are saved, and walk in the glory of God
and the light of the Lamb for ever!

revealed. Let us not exchange our birth-
right for meanness and vanity. Let not
present pain or poverty, or care, or care,
or pleasure, or grandeur, or any worldly
advantage, of any worldly distress, di-
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And may the gracious Spirit of the
Lord purify our hearts and enliven our
affections, that the continuance of this
world

S E R M O N XLII.

On Self-examination.

2 CORINTH. chap. xiii. part of ver. 5.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves.—

THE terms of our acceptance are written in God's word with such strength of character, that it seems difficult to mistake them. We are there assured, that he who "doth righteousness," and he only, "is righteous;" that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and
"purify

*"purify unto himself a peculiar people,
 "zealous of good works."* These and

such like doctrines are received and acknowledged. We profess our firm belief of that word by which they are conveyed. And when we look round us to the libertine and the gainfayer, perhaps we may regard our own happier situation with a secret complacency.

Perhaps we may be even tempted to exclaim, 'God! we thank thee that we
 'are not as other men are, despisers of
 'thy law, rejecters of thy word, unbelieving and disobedient. We receive
 'the doctrine of thy son; we look to
 'be partakers of his salvation; we call
 'upon his name; we attend upon his
 'ordinances; we present ourselves before
 'thy throne, acknowledging our
 'offences, imploring thy mercy, magnifying thy goodness, hearing and receiving thy holy word.'

Amos 4

God

S E R M O N XLII. 359

God forbid that such appearances should be uncharitably suspected or condemned. Yet we are assured, that there are who seem "*to be religious*;" yet "*their religion is vain*;" that the professed follower of our Lord may say that he is rich, yet be utterly insensible to his real condition of spiritual poverty, and wretchedness, and blindness, and nakedness. Such alarming declarations should awaken even the most secure; and call, with a powerful voice, on every individual among us to attend seriously to the exhortation of the text. (For we may consider it as a general exhortation, without regard to its immediate purpose or occasion.)

"*Examine yourselves*," therefore, "*whether ye be in the faith*;" whether your spiritual state be such as God's word requires, as manifests a lively, influencing faith in Christ Jesus, and gives
you

you a firm and reasonable assurance of his promised mercies. Nor let this examination be slight or careless. Let it be pursued, even to a full and clear discovery of your religious principles and conduct." "*Prove your own selves,*" by an accurate, a sincere and impartial enquiry.—Such is the direction of the Apostle, and such is the duty now to be enforced.

BUT the business of this place is not only to exhort, but to direct, and to assist. And as I address myself not to the rebellious or avowed libertine, but to those who have, at least, a form of godliness, I would lead them to consider whether its real power hath possessed their hearts. And for the purpose of such self-examination, let every hearer of this day, as he would not deceive his own soul, in a matter of unutterable moment, be collected, be attentive, while

while I lay before him some distinguishing marks of true religion, the term in which we include the knowledge and practice of our duties both to God and man, as taught and enforced by the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

In the first place, then, ye know that true religion supposes an enlightened mind. The will of God is to be collected from his word. On that word then, the light of our paths, we should fix with a firm and reverent attention. ' Have I duly consulted my unerring
' guide and counsellor? Do I daily meditate in the "*words of eternal life*?"
' Am I anxious to become "*wise unto*
"*salvation*?" Am I careful to draw
' from "*the fountain of living waters*?"
Such are the questions by which we are to prove our own selves.—' Or am I
' contented with the instruction of my
' infant years? With the doctrines of men?
with

‘ with a slight attention to the scriptures,
 ‘ seldom consulting, carelessly reviewing
 ‘ them, as if they were not given to every
 ‘ man to profit withall, but reserved for
 ‘ a particular profession, or necessary but
 ‘ for a particular stage of life ?

TRUE religion doth not indeed require
 that every private christian should be deeply
 studied in all critical and perplexed ques-
 tions, agitated, at any time, among the
 learned and the curious. But there are
 great leading truths, with which his mind
 should be duly stored, and deeply and
 awfully impressed. God and his attri-
 butes, his power, his purity, his wisdom,
 his gracious loving-kindness, his tremen-
 dous justice; Christ and his coming, his
 death, his exaltation, the duties he en-
 joins, the motives he proposes, the end
 of our vocation, and the means of ob-
 taining it; all these are clearly revealed.
 It doth not require the advantages of
 refinement,

SERMON XLII. 363

refinement, the extensive range of an improved and cultivated mind, to discern and to apply them. By the poor they were first preached, to the poor they were immediately addressed; they abide the strictest test of reason; but they are level even to the lowliest: and to every soul of man, it is above all things, and before all enquiries necessary, that he "*read mark, learn and digest*" the momentous doctrines.

And thus shall our religion be reasonable, and unsullied either by enthusiasm or superstition. The enthusiast reads in God's word, without the sober guidance of reason and reflection. His imagination is intoxicated, his passions enflamed; and their fervours he mistakes even for the influences of the spirit. His doctrine he expresses in mystic obscurity, or in a figurative language, unmeaning or misconceived. And he obtrudes this doctrine
 boD with

with the violence of spiritual pride ; with that false zeal which is bitter and uncharitable, obstinate and acrimonious. The superstitious renounces his true guide, and submits to the decisions of men, however absurd, extravagant, and impious. His religion is confined to minute and formal observances, to a mere bodily exercise, without the concurrence of the heart. To view the full effect of superstition, we must resort to the members of another communion, their lamentable ignorance, their abject submission, their penances, pilgrimages, indulgences, prayers in an unknown tongue, to the departed creature, and all their long train of errors and extravagances, unauthorized by God's word, or repugnant to his commandments. But God grant that some taint of superstition be not, at sometimes, found even in a purer communion! We may be superiour to many gross delusions ; but if we fondly conceive that the

God

God of truth and purity can be pleased with exteriour formality, or minute observances of any kind; if the corrupted heart conceives a vain purpose of atoning for its offences, by suspending them for a time; by some occasional exercises of devotion; if the multitude, or the prescribed forms or order, of prayers issuing only from the lips, be mistaken for true piety; in these and other like cases, we stand condemned of superstition: and in every case we are in danger of a fatal deviation from the way of life, when we carelessly or contemptuously turn from that light which should guide our footsteps.

But if we have not totally neglected the words of eternal life, let us in the next place examine whether our researches have been extensive and impartial: whether we have not confined our attention to some detached part, instead of searching

ing out the whole of God's good pleasure. For example, the mercies vouchsafed to us through Christ, are expressed in the most affecting declarations. We are assured, that he is the author of eternal salvation; that *"he loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;"* that by him God was pleased to *"reconcile all things to himself;"* that he is *"able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him;"* that *"other foundation can no man lay, but Jesus Christ;"* that in him we are blessed, chosen, adopted, accepted. We may receive these declarations of mercy with gladness. But do we also gladly receive the conditions, on which this mercy is vouchsafed? Have we seriously considered, that we are to *"walk as children of the light, worthy of our vocation; perfecting holiness in the fear of God?"* His promises are comfortable: but have we also weighed the denunciations of his
tremendous

tremendous wrath? Or have we indolently relied for salvation on the "*Blood of the covenant*," when by our actions, we have "*accounted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing*?" Or do we, on the other hand, look for acceptance from our own works, without regard to the way which God hath appointed, the conditions which his boundless goodness hath proposed, or to that name by which alone we can be saved?—These are points of most deep and awful consequence; and with respect to these the strictest and most impartial trial of our hearts is absolutely requisite.

He who hath searched the scriptures needs not be reminded, that there is no promise to the man who obstinately continueth in sin; or, that the end of all his knowledge is obedience. But let us, in the next place, examine the nature and measure of our obedience. God
requireth

requireth the whole heart. Is it then devoted to his service, entirely, willingly, without reserve, constraint or regret? To some instances of duty men may be determined less reluctantly, from temper or from habit. Are we then satisfied with yielding to our propensities? or doth a sense of duty counteract the force of our propensities? Do we maintain a strict sway over our most dangerous and predominant passions; and fortify ourselves against that sin, that "*doth so easily beset us?*"

THERE is no wretched creature so monstrously depraved, that he doth not still retain some good quality, some solitary virtue, still distinguishable in the foulness of his general corruption. But his general corruption is not thus redeemed or concealed. The libertine and sensual, for instance, may yet retain some semblance, or some species of benevolence

nevolence. But benevolence cannot atone for impurity; no more than freedom from impurity can cover the guilt of hardened selfishness. We may be sincerely contrite for our own offences, yet rash and severe in our judgments of other men. We may be possessed with some share of a devotional spirit: but this spirit doth not always cleanse the heart from malice or uncharitableness; nor keep the lips undefiled from censure, slander or reproach. Since, then, we are assured that our religion must not be a partial and defective service; and that our obedience must extend to the whole law, let us not confine our examination to the fairer parts of our conduct. Let us not speak peace to our souls, until we know clearly, and can profess sincerely, that we are labouring to do the whole good pleasure of the Almighty.

BUT it may be said, ' We have
' examined our consciences. They in-
' deed condemn us of various imper-
' fections and back-slidings. Yet our
' religious principles are founded on
' God's word: we acknowledge the
' necessity of universal obedience; and
' as far as human frailty will permit,
' we resolve to dedicate the whole heart
' to God.'—But let us examine still far-
ther. One great mark of true religion, we
know, is that it be uniform and perse-
vering. Is then the resolution thus
formed the mere effect of some acci-
dental emotion, or compunction, which
passeth with the occasion which pro-
duced it? Do we assume our religious
sentiments, at stated periods, in certain
circumstances, as if momentary and
occasional acts could produce habits for
eternity; or as if that into which the
heart and affections enter not, which is
not longed for and fought after, could
answer

answer the ends of religion, of purifying and exalting the soul, to qualify it for a divine life and angelick happiness? True religion is firm, constant, and habitual. It influences all our actions; and directs our whole course of life. It is not confined to particular places, to our closets or our churches. It attends us in society as well as in retirement; in the world and all its busy pursuits, as well as in the silent and solitary hour. It is the same in health and sickness; in joy and in affliction; in abundance and in want. Do we then feel this universal influence? Doth it give a meek and calm composure to our prosperity? Doth it enable us to enjoy our good things in serenity and thankfulness? Doth it speak effectual comfort to our distress? and in the hour of danger and calamity, doth it lift up "*the hands that hang down,*" and strengthen "*the feeble knees?*" Doth it sustain us, at

the prospect of approaching death, and raise us above all its terrors?

By such fruits, we are assured, that the engrafted word hath been received, cultivated, taken deep root, and thoroughly possessed our hearts. But should it appear, upon diligent examination, that what we call our religion, is assumed occasionally, is gloomy and morose, and instead of comforting, serves but to irritate, to distress us, to confound us, to make us hateful to others, and to ourselves; we may then be assured that our hearts are not right towards God; that we are in some instances paying a reluctant and distasteful service, as to an austere master, in order to avert his vengeance, not the filial veneration and obedience due to the great and gracious father of all creation: that we have then mistaken the temper he accepts and the service he requires; and that we are still

to

to seek for that benign spirit of Christianity which harmonizes every thought, and gives grace to every action ; which supports us, comforts us, and extends its blessed influence to all around us.

Thus have I endeavoured to direct you to the most interesting object that can possibly engage the heart of man. The point to be considered is nothing less than this, whether we be effectually working out our salvation, and walking in that path which leadeth to eternal life. It is no useless speculation, no curious or unnecessary research. It is the soul of every individual among us, which demands our serious and devout attention. Are our lives truly conformable to the will of God? Are we real and sincere followers of our redeemer? Are we indeed entitled to the blessings of his covenant? These are the questions to be addressed to our hearts. And if these may
be

be lightly regarded, then is eternal life nothing; and the everlasting happiness of a redeemed creature, of no value: it is of little import, whether for an eternity of existence we are to be raised to a state of exaltation, among the most exalted creatures of God; or whether, for ever and ever, we are to be banished from his presence, outcasts from his mercy, the companions of degraded and condemned spirits, driven from the glories and blessings of the faithful, to the mansions of despair and misery.

You say, and truly, that God is merciful, and will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss from error and imperfection. But where is the indulgence promised to carelessness and indifference? You say, in the language of the Prophet, "*the heart is deceitful above all things.*" And true it is we cannot know the hearts of other men. But if we be deceived by
our

our own, we have neglected to examine them ; or we have not examined with diligence and attention ; or we have tried them by a false and insufficient rule, making terms of acceptance for ourselves, which God hath not made ; wilfully or carelessly misconceiving his pure and perfect law ; not seeking the assistance of his gracious spirit to enlighten our understandings and support our weakness ; not frequently and fervently praying to the Almighty, in the language of the Psalmist, *“ search me, O God, and know my heart : try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me : and lead me in the way everlasting.”* *“ If our hearts condemn us”* of such neglect, *“ God is greater than our hearts.”* His judgment of us is still more enlightened, than that of our consciences, how well informed soever : for he knoweth all things ; he discerneth all the most secret perversions of our souls, the influence

fluence of self-love in darkening the understanding, the power of passion and corruption, in seducing us to a lax and imperfect sense of duty.

AND then, my brethren, to your sincerity, diligence; and to your diligence, watchfulness; and to watchfulness, devout prayer, for assistance and illumination from above. Thus, when the awful moment of dissolution is approaching, and the present scene of things ready to be closed for ever, we shall be enabled to cry out with the Apostle, "*This is my rejoicing, that in simplicity and godly sincerity I have had my conversation in the world.*"

AND here I should close this discourse, did I not conceive that there is a fair occasion of again calling on you to prove your own selves in one particular instance of duty. Let every individual who hears

me address this plain question to his heart.

‘ How have I received the present word
 ‘ of exhortation?’ If it hath been lightly
 regarded, it is evident that we do not study
 to improve those means of grace which
 God hath vouchsafed to us. For every
 administration of his word, however weak
 and imperfect, is one of those gracious
 means appointed by the Almighty for
 leading us to salvation. Hath it then
 been received with listlessness and distaste,
 as if ye were set down to make a melan-
 choly sacrifice to decency and fair ap-
 pearance? In this case be assured that
 some correction of the heart is necessary:
 and that it is not yet possessed with the
 true vital spirit of religion; for this is a
 flame kindling at once on admonition.
 And let those who have been devout and
 attentive hearers duly consider that the
 thoughts now excited are not to be at
 once dismissed. Their sincerity will be
 manifested by retaining, by revolving, by
 giving

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giving them a lasting and a lively influence.

AND may the gracious assisting-spirit of the Lord descend into our hearts, that we may be enlightened, stablished, strengthened: that we may look with due reverence and attention into the "*perfect law of liberty*"; and continue therein, not being careless or "*forgetful hearers, but doers of the work*," in sincerity and singleness of heart, that so we "*may be blessed in our deed.*" *I repeat ever lastly*

Life

S E R M O N XLIII.

Use of Abstinence,

ST. LUKE, chap. v. ver. 35.

The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them; and then shall they fast in those days.

THE life of our blessed Lord, and that of his forerunner, differed remarkably in their circumstances. John, who was but to announce the coming of the holy one, lived in retirement. Our Lord, whose words and works were to be publicly exhibited, and freely scrutinized, consoorted with the multitude, without reserve. He “*came eating and drinking,*” conversed with

with men of every order, and mixed with all their innocent societies and enjoyments. But his enemies exclaimed, "*behold! a gluttonous man, and a wine bibber.*" The hypocritical pretenders to sanctity reproached his disciples, that they and their master were little careful to separate themselves from sinners, but freely eat and drank with the most notorious.

THE gracious physician of souls justified this apparent liberty of conduct, beyond all pretence or scruple. He came to "*call sinners to repentance,*" "*to seek and to save that which was lost.*" His father's business required that he should associate with those who most needed his assistance; that he should administer to their wants, support their infirmities, correct their disorders, relieve them, comfort them, and restore them, by his healing doctrine.

STILL

STILL the envy, or the prejudices of those around him, suggested new objections. "*Why*," said they, "*do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?*"—' If thou
' be a teacher of purity and perfection,
' why are thy followers thus indulged?
' Why are they not confined within those
' strict bounds of discipline, which distinguish the followers of John, and to
' which the Pharisees adhere, as to the
' essence and perfection of righteousness.'

OUR Lord's reply was with gentleness and condescension. He compares himself to a Bridegroom, his followers to attendants on the nuptials. Their present state he represents as a state of joy and satisfaction, while their Lord was with them to support and comfort them. "*Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the Bridegroom is with them?*"
Alas! the scene must soon be changed.
Their

Their master must speedily be torn from them ; the shepherd smitten, and the sheep scattered. They must be offended and afflicted ; scorned, insulted, persecuted, tempted. The enticements of the world shall be displayed before them ; the terrors of the wicked thundered in their ears. This shall be the season for possessing their souls in patience, for caution and circumspection, for self-denial, fasting and mourning.—“ *The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them ; and then shall they fast in those days.*”

THE words, thus connected and explained, may suggest some points of doctrine worthy of our serious and devout attention.

IN this present season, by the wise and pious ordinances of our church, we are called

called to a particular collection of thought, to retirement and meditation, and self-denial. The invitation may be despised by those who are enslaved by the world. And when we cannot discover the least suspension of those cares and competitions, to which the busy part of mankind, or of those gaieties and pleasures, to which the disengaged devote their time and thought, we have reason to apprehend that the propriety and necessity of these duties are not known, or not regarded. Some perhaps there are who may pervert the best and most gracious purposes of the Gospel; and hope to atone for the foulest enormities, by some external acts of mortification. But from the portion of scripture now laid before us, we may learn first, the true nature and value of these duties; and secondly, the occasions and purposes which call more especially for the practice of them.

I. In the first place then, we find that the gracious and amiable spirit of our religion doth not condemn us to unnecessary severities. Superstition may consign the creature formed for an active and social course of duty, to useless solitude, restraints unnatural, to rigour, torture, or affliction. But the God of nature requires no such hideous service: the author of our salvation imposes no such intolerable burdens. Survey the visible workmanship of the Creator, and you find it happily diversified by a variety of engaging objects, stored with a profusion of blessings, supplied with wonderful abundance; for the ease and enjoyment of the creature, for the delight of his senses, for the indulgence of his natural and innocent desires, freely bestowed, and to be received with thanksgiving. Look into the perfect law of liberty, and you find its precepts gentle, gracious, and benevolent: all breathing the spirit of
goodness

goodness and loving-kindness; all admirably calculated for promoting our present, as well as for securing our future happiness.

AND were our understandings ever clear, and our affections duly regulated; were we subject to no disorder, exposed to no danger, beset with no temptation, then might we enjoy our good things freely and securely. But it is from our disorder, our spiritual dangers and temptations, that we are obliged to use them with caution, and frequently to deny ourselves the enjoyment of them. We have propensities to be resisted and controuled; passions ready to burst forth and hurry us into danger or destruction; allurements to seduce us; examples to misguide us. Beset with so many dangers from without, impelled so forcibly and so perversely from within, conscious

of weakness, taught by terrible experience to dread the power of worldly objects, we must esteem it an essential part of Christian duty to walk circumspectly; to retire at wary distance from every dangerous allurements; to watch carefully over our appetites and passions; to say to every desire and propensity, however blameless in themselves, "*hither-
to shall ye go and no further*;" to keep our bodies in subjection; and, to speak in the full strength of our Lord's expression, to "*deny ourselves*."

But this is a doctrine received, above all others, with greatest reluctance. That we should not only regulate our affections for the things of this world, but frequently deny ourselves the enjoyment of them, is deemed a violence to that nature which yields so easily to the invitations of sense and appetite. Yet do
the

the children of this world resist these invitations, when in pursuit of some vain or perishable advantage. The child of light is but commanded to practise the discipline and self-denial of a day, that he may enjoy the pleasures, and riches, and pre-eminence of eternity. And neither the allurements of worldly objects, nor the force of inclination, nor prevailing practice and opinion, nor the mistaken value set on carnal gratifications, can reconcile an inordinate love of present things to creatures of our endowments and expectations; or can detract one particle from that solemn declaration of the Gospel, that except a man "*take up his cross,*" except he renounce every thing the most dear to him, so far as it may be the occasion of his falling, he cannot be the disciple of Christ Jesus.—And such, I must repeat it, are not the declarations of an austere master, who

requires a rigorous and gloomy service. They are dictated by his mercy and compassion, who "*knoweth whereof we are made;*" and considereth our weakness; equally gracious in denying and in granting, in restraining and indulging: teaching us to regard our final destination with a stedfast and a patient view; not to estimate the happiness of a redeemed creature by the enjoyments of this mortal state, but to use the things of this world, so as to make them subservient to the interests of another, and to resign and reject them should they threaten to retard our progress to immortal happiness.

BUT the doctrine of self-denial, however at first view gloomy and disgusting, will appear more fully to be a doctrine of mercy and compassion, by considering, in the second place, the occasions and purposes

purposes for which the exercise of this duty is more especially required.

II. "*When the bridegroom shall be taken away,*" saith our Lord, "*then shall the children of the bride-chamber fast.*"—He was taken away from his immediate followers by his sufferings, his death, and his ascension; when, however, assisted and directed by the spirit, they had the malice and virulence of a corrupted world to encounter; when their victory was indeed compleat, but the conflict "*not joyous but grievous.*" In a spiritual sense, (and in such applications of scripture we may be indulged, provided they be reasonable and temperate,) In a spiritual sense, I say, the bridegroom is taken away from every one of us, when the influence of Christ's doctrine is weakened; when our love waxeth cold; when our hearts are estranged from
God's

God's law, possessed by worldly affections, perverted and corrupted by sensual objects.

Do we then find within us a sensible decay of all religious impressions? Is that spirit of christianity which should actuate the whole man, and influence his whole conduct, gradually declining, and in danger of being totally extinguished? Our state is truly alarming. We have been enticed and ensnared by the world. We have drunk too deeply of its intoxicating influence. We are falling incautiously into the depths of indolence and insensibility. And nothing can more effectually awaken us from this perilous slumber, than a speedy suspension of our favourite pursuits, and that manly self-denial which may collect our dissipated thoughts, and fix them steadily on our final destination. Alas! it is now no time

time for the tumult of business, for the allurements of pleasure. Suspend them, for they are dangerous. Exclude them, for they threaten to turn you utterly away from your great concern. Sequestered from the world, its occupations and indulgences, we shall have leisure for reflection; we shall feel our hearts disposed to seriousness; we shall recall and revolve those important objects, which when duly entertained, cannot fail to renew a right spirit within us.

Do we, again, experience the force and frequency of temptation? Are we by our state of life, and general intercourse exposed to all that seduction, which steals imperceptibly upon the frailty of man, conquers his resolutions, and leads him captive from the guidance of reason and religion? It is then our bounden duty and our truest wisdom, to retire

retire at some times from a situation so dangerous. It is written, "*Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.*" And we resist him most effectually when we turn aside from his allurements before they become too powerful; when we retire to renew our strength, and edge the weapons of our spiritual warfare; when by abstaining for a while even from innocent enjoyments, we acquire an habitual dominion over our most dangerous passions; and return to the conflict, guarded and invigorated with all the succours of reason and religion.

BUT there is one case in which the bridegroom may be said to be taken away from us, in a more especial and afflicting manner: When our hearts condemn us of some wilful offence committed against the clear dictates of conscience

conscience and religion. He who sins from ignorance or surprize, may flatter himself that he would not have fallen, had he been more enlightened or more attentive. He saith, that God will not be extreme to mark what he hath done amiss. But he who offends, with determined and deliberate purpose, hath no excuse or consolation. He stands on the deadly precipice; and the gulph of everlasting wrath opens to receive him. How shall he impress his mind with that consummate horror of his fallen state, which may lead him to effectual repentance? Shall he fly to the pleasureable scenes of life? Shall he plunge into the business and engagements of the world? These, alas! will stupify the pangs of conscience. They will agitate and distract and divert him from all sense of danger. He will be encouraged, countenanced, flattered, and reconciled to his sinful state:

state: 'till with a seared conscience, and hardened heart, he is led at length to the seat of the scorner, that tremendous extreme of transgression and corruption. Let him then instantly obey the first warnings of that gracious Being he hath offended. Let him shut out the distractions and enticements of the world; let him commune with his own heart in silence, let him call his ways to remembrance, in humiliation and mourning and fasting. With no business to engage, no pleasures to intoxicate, no society to seduce him, he now stands, as it were, without the precincts of this life, in the presence of an offended father and benefactor. Here he shall see and know and feel the misery of his condition. He shall exclaim with the Psalmist, "*Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.—I will confess*"

" my

"my transgression unto the Lord; and
 "thou forgavest me the iniquity of my
 "sin." Such shall be the issue of his
 discipline and godly sorrow.

ONE case more there is, in which
 retreat and self-denial become particu-
 larly necessary. When our intercourse
 with the world hath involved us in
 contention and animosity; (for it must
 needs be that such offences will come)
 when we are betrayed into any malig-
 nant thoughts or purposes, or in danger
 of conceiving any such thoughts or pur-
 poses, against our neighbour: If we feel
 the storm of passion rising in our breast,
 and ready to burst forth with headstrong
 and outrageous fury, the plain rules of
 Christian prudence teach us to fly from
 all irritating objects, and to mortify
 the body, that we may compose the
 disorders of the soul. It is the free and
 full

full indulgence in our good things, the unremitted intercourse with a world of rivalry and competition, the incessant pursuit of those advantages, to which we all aspire, each earnest to supplant his neighbour, and each possessed with flattering ideas of his own pretensions, that enflame the pride of man, that passion so destructive of our peace, and so injurious to those around us. It is in the silent and solemn hour of mortification, that we can discern the insignificance of those contests in which we have been engaged; the injuries we have committed; the offences we have misconceived, or aggravated; the forgiveness which we owe, and the reconciliation we should embrace; the want of candour in ourselves, the weakness and mistaken jealousies of others.

AND if in any one of these cases we be called to the duties of abstinence and self-denial,

self-denial, how much more when all, or most of them, conspire to warn us of our danger? If we not only feel a gradual decay of all religious impressions, an indifference and insensibility to the proper objects of an immortal creature; but are involved in such a society, and such a course of life as tend to confirm us in this indifference and insensibility; if at the same time the temptations of the world be all displayed before us; if they have subdued us; if we have wilfully yielded to them, embraced and entertained them; if our consciences condemn us of secret guilt; and if the business of the world hath involved us in contention; what voice can be more friendly, than that which calls us from the distracting and seducing scenes in which we have been engaged, from dissipation and allurements, from corruption, from animosity, to reflection, to meditation, to that salutary restraint and correction

tion of our appetites, which shall at once shew us our danger, and teach us to avoid it.

Thus it appears, that the most seemingly rigorous precepts of the Gospel are really dictated in mercy and compassion, to correct all dangerous impressions, to restore us to God's favour, and to preserve us blameless and harmless, in peace and charity with our fellow-creatures.

I HAVE assumed as evident, that what is called "*fasting*," in the text, and in the corresponding scriptures, "*mourning*," cannot be mistaken for a mere formal bodily exercise, or abstinence from particular meats; or that such acts or abstinence, of themselves, can have any godly influence. No, my brethren; what hath now been recommended is something more important, more intrinsically excellent. We exhort you to "*rend your hearts,*"

" hearts, and not your garments." We call you to recollection and meditation, to real self-denial and mortification; such as may dispose us to think on our ways, to turn our feet unto God's testimonies, to seek his face in the humility of contrition and fervent supplication, and thus to regulate our disorders, to strengthen our resolutions, and to perfect our repentance.

And let not the things thus delivered be received as unprofitable speculation, which cannot, or need not be reduced to practice; but are too gloomy and disgusting not to be dismissed at once. If you have indeed heard a gloomy and disgusting doctrine, fly to society, riot in its pleasures, leave no moment of your days disengaged from vanity and sensuality. So shall distaste and weariness, and discontent embitter your enjoyments. So shall ye never taste the true comforts of a meek,

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meek, a mortified, and an humble spirit. So shall your present day of discipline and preparation, be wasted in degrading pursuits, in sordid engagements, in senseless occupations, in a tremendous indifference to your final destination.—God forbid that we should be so infatuated as to imagine that our happiness was to be found in an unlimited enjoyment of any worldly objects! We press forward to something infinitely better, greater, and more exalted: “*To thee, O Lord, do we “look up,”* and though “*our hearts*” were “*smitten,*” though we should “*forget to “eat our bread,*” yet “*thou art the God of “our strength;*” and “*thy light and thy “truth*” shall “*lead us to thy holy hill, “and to thy sanctuary!*”

5 JY 61

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.